

Fred F. Harris, Jr.

Correcting Time

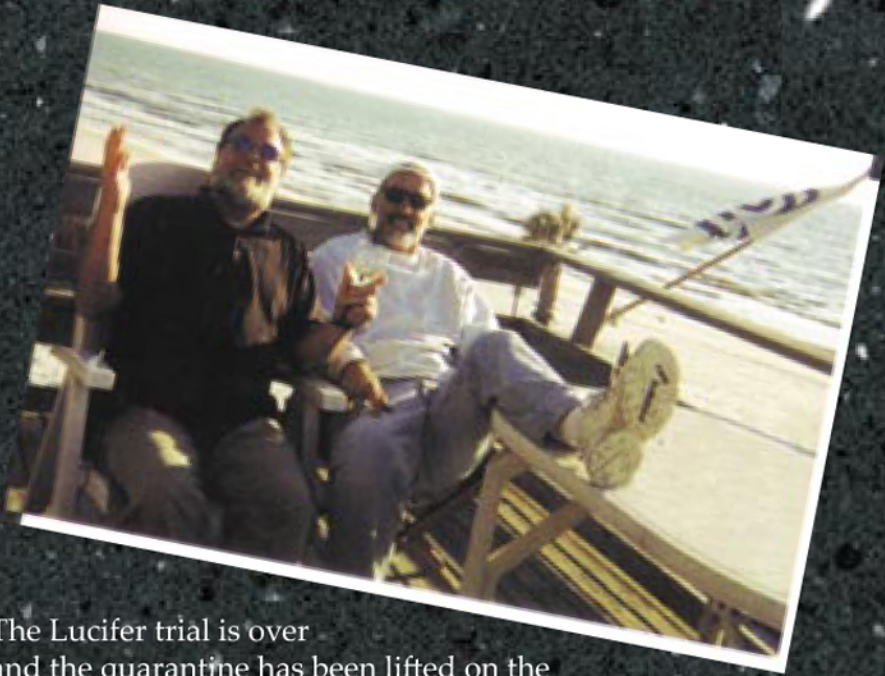


SQUARE
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Correcting Time

Where the Revelation meets the road



The Lucifer trial is over and the quarantine has been lifted on the rebellious planets. The circuits are open and the spiritual realm is abuzz. The order has come down to increase the spiritual energy by sending celestials to teach the people of these planets, including Earth. These efforts are designed to bring Earth's civilizations out of darkness and into the ages of Light and Life. The teachers can only succeed with the cooperation of the humans themselves. Mortals are recruited, consciously and unconsciously, to aid in the cause. The celestials are free to work in many ways but they have one basic restriction: they may not violate the free will of their students.

How did two such unlikely characters as Vincent and Roland get recruited into this mission? Neither knew much about spirituality until each was led by the same person to a big blue book that revealed the purpose of life and God's plan for universe progression. Follow the adventures of these two friends as they lend a hand in the Correcting Time.

CORRECTING TIME

by Fred F. Harris, Jr.



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CORRECTING TIME

REVISED EDITION

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by Fred F. Harris, Jr.



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I gratefully acknowledge the love and support of my irreplaceable wife, Lucy, and my incomparable children, Riley and Katie.

This book has been inspired by the exploits of my friend Roland. The unusual circumstances surrounding our introduction and resultant friendship have been an inspiration for my path. Roland, part sinner and part saint, is one of the most remarkable characters I have ever met.

I thank the many individuals who participated in one way or another in the completion of this book, especially those who read the many drafts of the original story and offered comments. I am particularly indebted to my editor and publisher, Saskia Raevouri, who, with Matthew Block, generously gave time and energy to this revised edition.

Fred F. Harris, Jr.
Tallahassee
April 2005

PROLOGUE

Deep in space, far from the Isle of Paradise, in the universe of Nebadon, is a weak star known as the sun. Spinning around that sun is a blue-green planet which its inhabitants call Earth. For hundreds of thousands of years Earth and a number of neighboring planets had been under a quarantine imposed by the universe authorities for the purpose of limiting a rebellion led by Lucifer. A brilliant angel, Lucifer had challenged and condemned the divine plan by which mortals become spirits as they ascend to the Isle of Paradise. He even questioned the existence of God, arguing that one should not be beholden to a fictitious God but rather should be free to develop without the universe training that mortals and celestials are required to undergo. Humans had a dim knowledge of the Lucifer rebellion and the angelic “war in heaven” from the teachings of several religions, particularly Christianity, and the Bible.

The quarantine severed the universe circuits by which interplanetary broadcasts and communications had been routinely transmitted. Even after Lucifer’s arrest following his defeat by Michael (who incarnated on Earth as Jesus of Nazareth), the quarantine of the rebellious sectors of Nebadon remained in place.

As a result of the rebellion and subsequent quarantine, the Earth’s populace knew little or nothing about the universe administration, the ascendancy plan for mortals of the realm, or, generally, the reason for their existence. For eons the inhabitants of Earth believed their planet was the center of the universe and

that all celestial bodies revolved around it. They even thought the Earth was flat and that no other life existed in the universe. In their backwardness they struggled for information, but little help seemed to be forthcoming from celestial intelligences.



The trial of Lucifer and his rebellious associates took hundreds of Earth years, but was speedy from the perspective of the celestials, for whom time is relative to their eternal existence.

In 1984, Earth time, Lucifer was judged guilty of rebellion against God. He refused rehabilitation and chose personality extinction, as did all the other leaders of the rebellion, whose egos could not accept the diminishment of stature inherent in rehabilitation. Michael wept when advised of their decisions. The lesser participants in the rebellion were each given the same choice, and most chose to be rehabilitated. After the adjudication, an order came from Paradise to lift the quarantine of the rebellion-tainted planets. The stage was set for bringing the affected worlds into "Light and Life," an advanced evolutionary stage reflective of the love showered on all beings in the universe.

Although celestial personalities normally aid mortals in ushering a planet into the status of Light and Life, universal mandates prohibit interfering with human free will. The humans must choose to take actions which will gradually lead the planet to an enlightened era where war is abolished, diseases are conquered, and hatred and greed are replaced by love and service. Such planetary transformation cannot occur overnight, or even within a generation or two. It usually takes at least a thousand years from the time of its initiation, but on a world as dysfunctional as Earth it was expected to take much longer.

When the order was issued following the adjudication of Lucifer, legions of celestial personalities were mobilized and plans were laid. The universe administration moved with dispatch to commence reestablishing the circuits to the quarantined planets, thereby assisting the inhabitants in their spiritual upliftment.

Earth at this time was a mess. Wars raged between nations, tribes and individuals. There was overpopulation and a general

unequal distribution of wealth. Injustice was often the rule. Pollution of air, water and land threatened the ability of the planet to sustain human life. Natural disasters frequently wreaked havoc. Weapons technology was so advanced that on several occasions the world teetered on the brink of annihilation. Families disintegrated. Hatred and suffering were rampant. People sought refuge in intoxicants and hedonism. Curiously, the world's religions were often responsible for much of this hatred and strife because of their intolerance of other religious groups. From the celestials' perspective, the task of turning this situation around was indeed daunting.

They had their work cut out for them.



Vincent was raised in a prosperous nation on Earth, though not in an affluent home. Still, he never missed a meal and always had a roof over his head. As a young boy, he was required to attend Catholic church, the church of his mother. Once, in an effort to attract the attention of a Protestant girl he was infatuated with, he attended her church, only to be rebuked by a priest during his next trip to the confessional. He abruptly stopped attending church and developed a disdain for organized religion. He spent his time in secular activities. He received diplomas and degrees, got married and had two children. For years his main concern was providing for his family and bettering their material circumstances. He became an attorney and worked long hours with a large law firm. This activity honed his judgment skills and expanded his knowledge of the ways of the world, but his comprehension of the ways of the spirit and of the universe was almost nonexistent. However, his indifference to organized religion was seen by the celestials as advantageous. Along with his position in society, it qualified him to be a potential assistant in their efforts to bring upstepped teachings to Earth. Many other candidates from around the planet were surveyed and selected as well, and the celestials planned ways of utilizing each of their different gifts and talents. But because mortal recruitment required the freewill choice

of the individual, gaining their cooperation was not expected to be easy.



After Lucifer was imprisoned, but before his trial and adjudication, the ministering spirits were concerned that Earth was sliding farther and farther away from an understanding of the truth. They also saw that the unsuspecting humans who had been selected to serve as key players in rehabilitating the planet would need a broader knowledge of the universe administration and the ascension plan. An emergency request by Earth's invisible superhuman residents—known as “midwayers”—was made to the universe government and was granted. A revelatory text was assembled, authored by diverse celestial personalities who were selected for their expertise in the various topics to be presented. It was edited, revised and approved by the revelatory commission, and when completed it was to be delivered to Earth.

But the commission faced a big problem. In the past, when revelations were given to the planet, difficulties had ensued. For the most part, the revelatory information had been transmitted through individuals known as prophets, who invariably became unduly venerated by their fellow mortals. Many of these “transmitters” of revelatory information unconsciously incorporated their own beliefs into the information received. Often the results were disastrous, as, for example, when their prejudices against women were presented as divine teaching. Many of these so-called prophets and their followers became fanatical and intolerant of other belief systems, thereby creating yet more hatred in place of the love of God and man, as had been intended. Correcting the damage would not be easy. The method of delivery of this latest revelatory text would need to be vastly improved to avoid the errors of the past.



It is hard for some humans to accept the fact that celestial personalities exist. For those who *do* accept the premise of a non-

material realm, it is difficult for them to acknowledge the fallibility of celestial personalities. Earthlings assume that spiritual beings are all omnipotent and omniscient, but such is not the case. For the most part, celestial personalities are either descending beings (such as angels) who are created for a particular purpose, or ascending beings (such as former mortals) who are now progressing in stages from the material to the spiritual on their way to Paradise. The universe is a huge educational system where each personality progresses ever upward and inward, guided through a regimen of learning and teaching, teaching and learning, until, after many eons of training and service, that perfected individual arrives on the shores of the Isle of Paradise to be embraced by God, the Source and Center of all things and beings.

Most of Earth's inhabitants believed that when they died they would either go straight to heaven or be sent to hell to burn for eternity with Satan. They believed that only during this one mortal existence did they have the opportunity to accept "the truth" and be saved, or be lost forever. No wonder so many humans feared God and God's judgment! No wonder so many religious denominations believed they held the exclusive truth and that it was their duty to enlighten the world, even, if necessary, by the sword! No wonder revelatory information disseminated previously was deemed flawless and complete, so much so that each word and phrase was meticulously studied, dissected and even worshipped!

This concept of scriptural infallibility was of concern to the celestials in charge of delivering the new revelation, not only because of the resistance to new information among those who believed their particular text was the final word of God, but also because those who fervently embraced this new material might likewise become closed to any further revelation. While the celestials were more interested in the substance of the revelation than in its linguistic structure or its method of delivery, they studied the past problems and agreed that, to avoid confusion, the new revelation would need to be clearly written and properly presented to the world or it might once again cause more harm than good. And it had to include within it clues regarding the coming time of correction.

To this end, the celestial authors painstakingly crafted their language so that no inconsistencies or poor syntax would hinder the basic message. They selected a relatively advanced culture in which to produce it, one that was pluralistic enough to permit the free flow of ideas. They searched for a human being capable of transmitting the information without contamination, and who could carry out his assignment without expecting or desiring fame and fortune. They instructed the humans who were collaborating in the project to maintain a low profile to avoid inflaming the religious denominations of the day, whose objections to a new revelation, the celestials feared, might lead to suppression of the book they were producing.

While this new tome could be regarded as an expanded textbook of celestial cosmology, it also included comforting teachings about the currency of the universe—God’s love. It presented the analogy of God as a benevolent father and mortals as God’s children. It aimed to dispel the fear of God by replacing it with the teaching that God loves us as parents love their children.

The Urantia Book was published in 1955. It was a large volume, very detailed and deep. Few were interested.

But a few were all the celestials needed.

1

In 1991 Vincent was learning to navigate the Internet. He had located a bulletin board for readers of the Urantia Book, a revelatory text that he had recently discovered. Wanting to share some important news, he carefully typed his message and emailed it to the list.

“Greetings to you all! I am new at this type of communication so I will apologize in advance for my screw-ups. I am so happy to have found this list and I want to introduce myself and apprise you of an exciting new development.

“I am 38, a lawyer, and I have been reading the Urantia Book for only a couple of years. Still, the truth it contains has resonated within me and I am confident of its accuracy. I accept that it was written by celestial personalities who wanted this world to better understand what is really going on in the universe and on this planet. It all makes perfect sense to me! That’s the surprising part of it all in light of my training in traditional logic.

“While I’m sure those on this list can understand my excitement in finding this book, it may be harder for you to accept what happened to me not long after serendipitously being introduced to it.

“The celestials are back with more!

“I want to tell you that the celestials indicate that the Lucifer rebellion has ended and that legions of additional celestial beings are on their way to this planet to assist in bringing it to a more

loving place. Even now, celestial teachers have communicated with long-time Urantia Book readers, and are teaching them the ways of God. It is an exciting thing I have to report and, while it is a little out of the ordinary, we appear to be entering into a time of progress toward enlightenment. The celestials call it the 'Correcting Time.'

"Well, this is a lot to lay on you in my very first post, but I will be glad to discuss these matters with those who are interested. I will post more and even some of the teacher lessons at a later time. I'm looking forward to getting to know each of you.

"Best regards, Vincent"



Two years earlier, in 1989, Vincent was sitting in his law office in Tallahassee as he had done for eight years, working on his files and cases. He had advanced in his profession and developed a good reputation in his community. In college he had promoted and booked rock bands. He still maintained a keen interest in music and liked to dabble in the legal side of music from time to time. Among other clients, he represented Butch Trucks, a drummer for the Allman Brothers Band. That morning Butch had asked him to consider representing a young man who wrote and performed his own music, and Vincent was waiting to meet him.

Before long a striking young man in his mid-twenties was ushered into Vincent's office. Sticking out his hand, he said, "Hello. My name is Ray and I intend to be a rock-and-roll star."

Don't we all, thought Vincent. "Hello," he said, "please have a seat. Would you like a cup of coffee?"

Over coffee Vincent learned that Ray was from Salt Lake City. He had come to Florida, with his wife and two small children, to record his songs in a nearby recording studio. He needed legal help to protect his compositions and financial help to survive during the process of becoming a rock-and-roll star. He was painting houses to get by, living hand to mouth with no health insurance and not much money for food. He knew only a few people in town. Vincent thought it strange that someone from Utah would come to Florida to record, especially considering the financial situation he and his family were in. At the time, Vincent attributed it

to the eccentricities of rock-and-roll musicians; later, he wasn't so sure.

Vincent was intrigued with the idea of representing a budding star, especially one recommended by an already successful musician, so he agreed to represent Ray. But to Vincent's surprise, Ray, despite his circumstances, would not agree to the representation until he had explained to Vincent the philosophy that inspired his music. Vincent assured Ray that it was not necessary to know his philosophy in order to provide legal advice, but Ray insisted.

"Okay," said Vincent, "what is your philosophy?"



It had not been easy for the celestials to nudge Ray to move from Utah to Florida, or to get him to connect with Vincent, but all the pieces had fallen into place and the plan to enlist Vincent was going well. They smiled at one another as they watched the two men discuss the Urantia Book—the revelatory text which the celestials had delivered to the planet in accordance with the mandate given them by the universe authorities. They hoped that Vincent wouldn't drop the ball.

It is a challenge for celestials to work with humans, all of whom exercise their free will with an unpredictability that borders on chaos. But such was the nature of the work on a planet like Earth, which had not only been quarantined but had also suffered from the default of the incarnated superhuman couple, Adam and Eve. This default had retarded the genetic upliftment that the progeny of such a couple normally brought to an evolving planet when they interbred with the local population.



"Well," explained Ray, "I've always been a seeker. I tried numerous mainstream and fringe religious philosophies and each lacked something. Then I happened upon the Urantia Book at a bookstore and bought it as a gift for my father-in-law. But before

wrapping it, I read some and liked it so much that I went back and bought a copy for myself. I've been reading it ever since and it continues to ring true. The sections about celestial administration and orders of celestial personalities, while interesting, are not as important to me as the parts that describe who we are and how we should view this journey we call life. I want you to read this Urantia Book."

With that, Ray handed Vincent a copy of the Urantia Book.



Vincent looked at the book. It was over two thousand pages long, printed on onion skin paper and about as thick as a New York City telephone book! Ray claimed that it was written by celestial personalities. Vincent laughed and told Ray that he had to read all day at work and that there was no way he would be able to wade through this book in his spare time. Ray asked Vincent to at least try some of it, and marked selected portions for him to read.

Reluctantly Vincent took the book home. That night, while lying in bed, he began to read. He ignored the purported celestial authorship and read only for substance. He noted that it was well-written and concise. The more he read, the more interested he became. The truth within the book's pages became apparent to him. For the next two months he read every night into the wee hours of the morning.

He was hooked.

2

In New Zealand in 1984 a small group of people who met periodically to discuss spiritual matters were surprised when one of the members announced that she had “heard” voices while meditating. What’s more, she said she could tune in to the voices and repeat audibly what she heard. The group was skeptical, but agreed to experiment.

Over the next several years they were taught about the love of God and this planet’s need for a spiritual upliftment. The teachers claimed to be a host of celestial personalities, including one who introduced himself as Abraham and another who called himself Machiventa Melchizedek. But the real shock came in 1989, when one of the members discovered the Urantia Book, in which Machiventa Melchizedek was described in great detail. Suddenly they had a context in which to view the messages. They could hardly believe it, but there it was: an independent verification of the information they had been receiving.



Although the concept of a higher authority, a Creator, a God, was widely held on the planet, it had raised more barriers to peace than bridges. This was distressing to the celestials and had resulted in significant disillusionment for many humans as well. People were more motivated by greed than by love, and it showed—such poverty, such wealth, such self-centeredness, such need! Disparities and inequities abounded.

There was also so much misunderstanding regarding the nature of God. For many, God was a wrathful, judgmental being to be feared. The Correcting Time was, in large part, an attempt to provide a better picture of the true personality of God.



The celestials had initiated a plan that was flexible enough to adjust for any exigency. Michael, the universe sovereign and a Creator Son of God, was in charge, but the day-to-day activities were directed by a team of Melchizedeks, an order of descending beings whose main objective was to teach and train those on their way to Paradise. Assisting the Melchizedeks were a host of angels, seraphim, midwayers and ascending personalities. When volunteers were sought from ascending celestial personalities to participate in the mission, the response had been overwhelming. To be of service in bringing Light and Life to a quarantined sector of the universe was indeed a choice assignment, especially when the planet in question was the one upon which their universe sovereign had lived a life as a mortal.

In order to qualify as the sovereign ruler of a universe, each Creator Son must successfully complete seven separate bestowals, in which he participates in the lives of his creatures by becoming one of them. By personally experiencing the life of a mortal, a Creator Son becomes more understanding of the problems faced by all mortals throughout his universe. Planet Earth was the location of the seventh bestowal mission of the Creator Son Michael. Here he incarnated as the lowliest will creature of the universe, a human being. Here he earned his sovereignty of the local universe of Nebadon, and left his legacy as Jesus of Nazareth.



At first only one hundred ascendant beings were selected to be teachers during the Correcting Time, fifty who had been female and fifty who had been male. (After death gender is no longer an issue although certain experiential empathies carry over.) Most came from planets in various stages of evolution in the local

universe of Neadon. The Melchizedeks reasoned that because the teachers' mortal lives had been so different from the lives of typical Earthlings, the teachers would be forced to stick to the spiritual basics, the one thing they all had in common. They were instructed to focus on the spiritual lessons and let the mortals work out their own social, political and economic problems. No interference with free will was permitted.

The celestial volunteers gathered at the planetary headquarters on Earth to listen to their introductory address.

3

“Greetings! We welcome you and congratulate you on your selection. As you know, the Lucifer trial has ended and, unfortunately, Lucifer and his top officers refused to accept rehabilitation. That is the sad news.

“The good news is that from Paradise comes the order to lift the quarantine of the rebellious sectors of Nebadon and to proceed to bring those planets and their inhabitants into the Light and Life of God. Even as we speak, legions of celestial communications experts are reconnecting the universe circuits, which will enable us to have access to all universe information bases and to receive universe broadcasts. We will no doubt be on the universe news from time to time as this mission progresses. All in the universe of Nebadon watch in anxious anticipation.

“We will, of course, be in the service of Michael, our beloved universe sovereign. He will be personally involved with the mission and he is especially interested in the progress of Earth, as you can well imagine.

“Although Earth and the other rebellion-tainted planets have been under quarantine since the beginning of the Lucifer rebellion, they have not been without our assistance. We have done our best to keep spiritual truth alive, with mixed results. Prior to Lucifer’s arrest during Michael’s incarnation on Earth, we battled Lucifer frequently. He could vex humans by taking them over and subverting their free will. After Lucifer’s arrest, however, neither he nor his agents could enter a human’s mind without that

person's consent, although Lucifer and his minions could still cause trouble. Since the adjudication, the rebellious ones have either accepted rehabilitation or have been extinguished. They can cause no more mischief. Their legacy continues among humans, though, as you see by viewing the events occurring every day on this planet. In truth, we feared the humans would destroy themselves before we could reach this stage, but such an eventuality has been averted and hopefully we can set them on the climb away from such behavior. Much of that will be up to you.

"As you know, we recently delivered a revelatory text to the planet. We call it the Urantia Book. You have all studied it. For the most part, it presents spiritual information you already know, but it also includes a history of this planet which is helpful in understanding how the planet got to where it is today. Only a few scant thousand humans have read the book, and a small number of those actually incorporate its teachings into their daily lives. In fact, it has been over-intellectualized, and readers have quarreled among themselves over the best way to publicize it. Those who have read the book will be the first humans we try to contact, but we will not limit ourselves to them for their number is too small. Our goal is to bring the entire population to a better understanding of the Paradise plan.

"Presently many humans who read the Urantia Book do so in groups so they can discuss its contents among themselves. We had hoped that this practice would engender a more spirit-led individual, but such has not generally been the case. Still, we will try to speak to one or two individuals in those groups and have them communicate our lessons to those we are unable to reach directly. That's where you come in.

"Each of you will be a teacher for a group. The groups will become Melchizedek schools. Although the Melchizedeks will determine the substance of the lessons, it will be up to each of you to personalize the lessons to best fit your perspective and the character of your group. It is your job to assist and transform your students into walking conduits for God's love. That doesn't mean we want them to quit their jobs to sell Urantia Books at airports and malls. Hardly. Their outer lives should remain the same. They still must deal with the material world and raise their families.

They will not be spared the adversities of life but we hope they will view those problems from a different perspective. It is their attitude and outlook that should change. Your job is to encourage those transformations without unduly disrupting their lives. The changes in them will draw others to them. That is the only way humanity will be influenced by our message—to see its effect in the lives of our students.

“This mission can only proceed one person at a time. Miracles and the like are strongly discouraged. Predictions are also forbidden. You are incapable of knowing for sure what the future will bring, and even if you could know, humans would only become dependent on you if you offered predictions. So don’t make them!

“Another thing. Humans will implore you to tell them what they should do when they come to a point of decision. Remember, you have no idea which is the best path. Do not—I repeat—*do not* involve yourself in human decisions. Humans must make their own choices, if they are to grow in wisdom. Our generalized teachings may help them, but specifics must be left up to the individual.

“Humans will also want to ‘talk’ to their dearly departed loved ones. You all know that this is normally not permitted, but even if it were, we wouldn’t want these teaching sessions to become séances. If the particular person is concerned about the well-being of a loved one, just remind them of the love of the Father for all His children.

“Because this world is sensitive to gender inequalities, it would be helpful to teach them that although we liken God to a father, God is neither male nor female but both. Should there still be resistance to the concept of God as ‘the Father,’ then call God the First Source and Center or some other gender-neutral name. After all, we are not here to create barriers to the basic message of love for one another, but to ensure that all are educated in the basic truths of the universe.

“One thing we wish to promote is a tolerance for other beliefs. We will not foster Light and Life on this planet by tearing down anyone else’s beliefs or belief systems. No; instead all should understand that there are many paths to God and none are exclu-

sive. There is truth in all religions, in all paths of sincere seekers. We will teach by emphasizing the truth, not by disparaging the dogma. This Teaching Mission is for all, not for any select group. We will not stand for another system of priests, but instead will encourage each individual to have a personal relationship with God.

“The belief that only a select few will go to heaven is the basis for much intolerance of another’s sincere convictions. That intolerance is the cause of much hatred and strife. We must convey the truth that the test to advance is slight, and that only those with full knowledge of the plan who consistently choose to follow the iniquitous path are excluded. We recommend that you analogize the relationship between God and each human as that of a loving parent and a child. The parent loves the child and gives that child every opportunity to advance despite the child’s abominable behavior. Such is the way of God. Remind the mortals that they are children of God.

“We will continue these meetings as we go, especially early on since we have not yet placed any teachers with groups. The process of celestials teaching mortals will take time and will no doubt be actively opposed by those who fear the new development. It is an unusual practice on this planet and will be subject to errors. In time you will come up with more effective ways to advance the teachings, but for now this is the approved method.

“While you await assignment, continue to study and observe. When we find mortals who are capable and willing to listen to our messages and then transmit them, we will offer you the opportunity to practice with them. You will also be involved in studying your prospective group prior to your formal introduction to them so you can better get to know them. In the interim, get some rest.

“You will be needing it.”

4

Rock and roll is a tough business. Vincent had been representing Ray for several months. He had secured rights in the songs, negotiated an agreement with the recording studio, made some demo tapes, and even shot a video—all with Vincent’s money and Ray’s enthusiasm. They had traveled to New York and talked to recording executives, all to no avail. In the process they had become friends. Vincent often had Ray’s family over for dinner and lined up painting jobs for him, including his own house. The two frequently stood in Vincent’s driveway and shot baskets, discussing politics, babies and, of course, the Urantia Book for hours on end. Vincent had become enamored of the book and had purchased over fifty copies which he handed out liberally to his friends. He was shocked by their lack of interest. No one was grabbed by it as he had been.

Ray wasn’t surprised. He believed that only those who were ready for the book actually clicked with it. He called it the “veil theory” and told Vincent not to worry, that all the books he was giving away would be on some bookshelf waiting for the right person to come along when their veil was ready to be lifted.

Ray never did become a rock-and-roll star. After a year or so, he moved back to Salt Lake City intent upon going back to school and becoming an attorney. After Ray left, Vincent began going down to the local park with Midnight, his black Labrador retriever, each night. He liked to call the dog Muttley after the biscuit-loving dog on the cartoon, “Quick Draw McGraw.” Muttley would

swim in the water while Vincent stood on the short wooden bridge talking to God. He mainly told God about his day and thoughts about the next day, and then would offer his services to God and ask for insight on more effective ways of presenting the Urantia Book to others. Despite half-accepting Ray's veil theory, Vincent was frustrated by his lack of success in interesting others in such an informative and inspirational book. He thought of all the ways the book could be promoted—one-to-one discussions, radio, television, talk shows, newspapers. He mulled each possibility over in his mind then discarded them one by one, for one reason or another. But he kept thinking and he kept asking God for help.

You have to be careful what you ask for.



The celestial teachers gathered for their briefing. Today it was being given by Abraham, who had been appointed head of the Teaching Corps. Abraham had been a student of Machiventa Melchizedek while the two were on Earth together more than four thousand years earlier, and now he was assisting the Melchizedeks in this Correcting Time process. Abraham was the only ascending personality from Earth to be participating in the Teaching Mission, and he knew what a gritty world Earth could be.

"Good morning, folks. I am Abraham. I am going to be in direct charge of the teachers. I work under the Melchizedeks and, of course, we are all in the service of Michael and he in the service of God. Quite a chain of command, eh?

"Today we have excellent news for you all. As you know, we practiced this communicating process recently with a group from New Zealand. I talked to them a bit, as did Machiventa, and even Gabriel came down for a chat. They have discontinued the discussions for now, which is okay because we learned a lot and confirmed a lot of what we already knew.

"We also previously spoke to several groups, primarily in California and Hawaii, when we feared an atomic war. Luckily we averted that situation but the failed prediction highly upset the

participants. So we learned from that. Actually we have spoken to a number of groups of late on an experimental basis.

"We are now ready to kick the Teaching Mission off in earnest. And we have found our first willing human!"

A round of celestial applause went up.

"That's right, and we have made preliminary contact with her through a teacher named Ham. Ham spoke to her as she was ironing shirts in her dry cleaning business. You should have seen her face! She thought someone was playing a trick on her. In fact, it was quite a number of contacts later before she believed she was really talking to a supernal being. She is a long-time Urantia Book reader and studies with a group. She has advised them of the contact and we hope she will soon feel comfortable in passing on the lessons that we give her.

"Stand by for future developments."



Vincent received a letter from his source for buying Urantia Books informing him that the organization that held the book's copyright had prohibited them from further wholesaling the book. This organization was also suing a dedicated reader for copyright infringement. The reader had scanned the book into a computer and was giving away disks containing the entire text. Vincent now had to find another wholesaler and this angered him. What could possibly be the reason for restricting sales? The Urantia Book was already nearly impossible to find and very few people had even heard of it. The holder of the copyright was now allowing readers to purchase only three books per year! He had bought and given away over a hundred books last year alone! Not that anyone was reading them, but Vincent had hopes that one day someone he gave the book to—or maybe a friend of theirs—would get hold of it and see the value in it. He figured he was planting seeds. He could afford to do it, and this made him feel better about his inability to interest anyone in the book.

On the bridge that night he began formulating a plan. Most people only want what they can't have, especially in America. The

best way to interest people in something is to ban it—a contrarian approach. What if it was made known that a revelation had been delivered and its proprietors wouldn't permit anyone to have a copy? That would surely make it more interesting, he thought. Since he was a lawyer, he considered instigating a lawsuit to invalidate the copyright. Although he wasn't a copyright lawyer or a litigator, he had great confidence in his ability to crush the holders of the copyright. He paced the bridge for a while, turning this thought over and over in his mind, then he raised his hands and arms skyward and asked God the same thing he did every night: "Please, God, let me know your will and then give me the strength to do it."

Then he and Muttley headed for home.

5

In 1991, in Salt Lake City, Ham was busy teaching his little group. It had started out small, around eight to ten people, and had grown to almost twenty participants. Ham would start off with a lesson and then take questions. Some of the questions were real doozies. One man even asked if his tennis elbow could take tennis more than two times a week! Ham tried to keep the questions on more spiritual matters, but to appease these humans he made an effort to answer every single question posed to him. This group was an experimental one and the teachers were learning as they went along. Boy, Ham thought, these humans are a strange lot. But he continued. Abraham even dropped in on occasion to deliver a lesson or two.

The group was made up of different personalities, each of whom was observed and analyzed by the celestial teachers. The teachers had a limited ability to read the minds of the mortal participants (and only with that person's permission), but the humans' reactions still surprised the supernals.



The teachers gathered for their daily briefing. It was to be given by Machiventa, the head of the Melchizedeks resident on Earth.

"Okay, everybody, take a seat. Let's get started. As you know, we have placed the first teacher into a group interested in instruction! We hope this will make it easier to get others interested. But more on that later.

"Today I want to remind you that while we work from the outside, each individual on this planet and on every other inhabited world is a child of God. What does that mean? Well, it means that, like any good parent, God loves all His children equally, no matter what their circumstances are, whether they are black, white, red, yellow or purple. Regardless of their religious persuasion, God loves them all the same. You have probably heard that 'God is no respecter of persons.' That is what it means. Not only that, but in order to be personally involved in each person's life, God gave each one a gift—a fragment of Himself—that resides within each of their minds. This piece of God is working from the inside to encourage each person to take the highest path, the path with heart, the path with the most love in it.

"God works from within; we work from without, and our contributions are minor in comparison. Now why, you may ask, is the world in such a mess if God is working with each person individually? Good question. The answer is that for the most part God's work is subtle. Most people don't look for God's gentle encouragements. They only call out to God when they are in serious trouble. They hustle and bustle around, spending their time on inane matters and don't give God a thought until someone dies or is suffering adversity. This tendency is exacerbated by the lack of instruction to the contrary, mainly because the planet has been isolated for so long. Plus, rampant materialism and self-aggrandizement are the values society sells them every day of their lives. So God lurks but is not generally sought.

"Our job is to turn this world around. And how will we do that? We will encourage all our students to take at least ten minutes a day to listen for God. After thanking God for their many blessings, they should take ten minutes to clear their minds, sit in the stillness and try to hear the voice of God within. This should be our recurring theme. Work it into your lessons. Remind your students at every opportunity. They won't do it at first, but once they see the benefits, they will—most of the time.

"Okay, any questions?"

One of the teachers spoke up. "Who do we see as our next group and what are we doing to accomplish contact?"

"We are working on several possibilities," answered Machiven-ta. "The next two teachers to be assigned have been notified. They

know who they are. Don't worry about it but just keep studying. Your turn will arrive soon enough. Remember, we have time on our side. And we shall not fail."



Vincent was in his office when Ray called. He hadn't heard from him for a while and eagerly took the call.

"Ray, how are you doing?"

"Great! I'm in school and getting good grades this time. I guess painting houses gives you a better motivation for trying harder in school. Plus we've had another boy!"

Jeez, thought Vincent, he's already destitute and has no health insurance. The only reason he has a car is because I co-signed on it with him. Oh, well. . . .

Vincent cleared his throat. "Congratulations, Ray, and all the best to all of you." After making a mental note to buy a gift for the baby, Vincent began telling Ray about his plan to break the Urantia Book's copyright, to free the book and generate public desire for it. Vincent had convinced himself that it would work. He had already been thinking of a way for the trial to take place in Florida so he could obtain an early advantage and save money on travel in the litigation to come.

Ray listened politely but was not enthused. He had something else on his mind. "Vincent, have you heard what's been happening in New Zealand?"

Vincent hadn't.

"Well," Ray went on, "a group of metaphysical students claim they've been receiving communications from all manner of celestials, messages clearly consistent with the Urantia Book, even though they had never heard of the book before."

Another contact?, thought Vincent. Well, why not?

Ray pressed on. "Remember Roland, my father-in-law?"

Vincent recalled Ray's mentioning that he had given Roland a Urantia Book five years ago and that all that time it had sat on Roland's bookshelf gathering dust. "I have a vague recollection of Roland from stories you told me while shooting hoops in my driveway," said Vincent. "Why?"

"Well," said Ray, "Roland not only had the veil lifted, he has gone to a group meeting here outside of Salt Lake City where they are being taught by a celestial teacher who answers questions!"

"What?" Vincent retorted skeptically. "Roland sounds like a flake."

"Maybe so, but I met the lady who is the transmitter/receiver for the group and she is pure as the driven snow. She doesn't charge or ask for anything. Plus, the transcripts of the weekly meetings are great. I'll send some along to you."



A few days later, Vincent received a manila envelope in the mail from Ray. In it were fifteen or twenty pages of transcripts of the teachings of Ham, along with answers to a number of questions. Vincent grew wide-eyed when he read the lessons—they, too, had the ring of truth to them, much like the Urantia Book had had when he first read it. The questions, by and large, made him groan. He couldn't believe that someone with an opportunity to ask questions of a celestial would ask such drivel.

There was a note from Ray attached to the transcripts offering Vincent the chance to send in questions that would be relayed to Ham by Roland.

Vincent contemplated what questions he would ask and finally settled on two, which he included in a letter mailed back to Ray. The first, which wasn't covered in the Urantia Book, was, what percentage of humans make it to the next step after death? Vincent figured that if it was one tenth of one percent, he would forget it right there and just live out his life mindlessly. Secondly, Vincent wanted to know if this type of celestial teaching was going on in or near his hometown in Florida.

After a couple of weeks he had put all this out of his mind as work piled up. He still went to the bridge with the Mutt each night and still plotted to break the copyright of the Urantia Book.

Otherwise he was oblivious to what was about to unfold in his life.

6

Roland was in his early fifties and had long since divorced Ray's mother-in-law. Before the Urantia Book came into his life he was happily single, drinking heavily and chasing women. He lived in northern Utah, just a little above Salt Lake City. He had studied philosophy in college, was especially interested in Carl Jung, and read voraciously on many different topics. He earned his living developing real estate.

Several years earlier, Roland had begun reading the Urantia Book and, much like Vincent's experience, it struck a nerve. He also tried to change his lifestyle in accordance with his interpretation of the book. His vices began to fall away one by one as he switched from self-destruction to moderation in most things.

When informed about the celestial teacher nearby, he dropped by to check it out. He liked what he heard and continued to attend, and he kept Ray advised. Since Ray had given him the Urantia Book and was the father of his grandchildren, they had a special bond. Roland also began seeking the stillness for ten minutes each day.

The celestial members of the teaching corps watched these and other developments. Certain people around the country were becoming interested in this Teaching Mission, although it was still in its infancy. The Utah group was sending tapes out to other Urantia Book study groups and encouraging them to come and see for themselves. To date no one had, but it had only been going on for four months. Much was afoot.



The receptionist buzzed Vincent and announced Ray's call. Ray was excited. Ham had answered Vincent's questions.

"What did he say?" Vincent inquired.

"First, Ham says that the only people who don't make it to the next stage are those who have knowingly rejected God and chosen extermination rather than survival. All doubtful cases are allowed to survive. Since few people on Earth really understand what the ascension plan entails, it is hard for them to *knowingly* reject survival."

Vincent chuckled. He figured the answer would be something like that. That will disappoint a lot of fire-and-brimstone preachers, he thought, but it made good sense to him. "What about the answer to my second question?"

"That's a more curious answer," Ray intoned. "Ham said to look for the couple on Greenbriar Road."

"What? What does that mean?" asked Vincent.

"Don't know. Check it out. The Utah group is dying of curiosity themselves."

Ray hung up, leaving Vincent puzzled.



The teachers were abuzz as their briefing came to order. Daily, different celestials arrived, each with a different purpose. Some came to study the Earth's environment and to determine steps necessary to stem the tide of pollution. Some were there to assist in the eradication of certain diseases. There were angels of commerce, of the churches and of every pursuit of life of the planet. Still others came to help build a celestial superstructure from which all manner of assistance could be given in this mission—all with the proviso that the free will of humans could not be impaired. The universe watched as things progressed. Everyone was confident that they were participating in a very important project.

The world, however, was, for the most part, oblivious to the celestial activity. People continued their wars and even started new ones. They continued to hate each other and to accumulate more

than their share of material goods. Injustices were reported on every nightly news program.



"Would everyone quiet down, please!" Machiventa was ready to give his daily lesson.

"Today I want to speak of adversity. Everyone goes through adversity, some more than others. People on this planet have at times theorized that unearned adversity is proof that there is no God, or, if there is, that He is mean and unjust. Others point to the savagery and injustice in the world and question why God permits such to go on.

"Adversity may be a result of sheer chance or of a lifestyle that promotes disaster. Adversity, however, is a form of opportunity. You have heard that adversity builds character. It can, but only if the afflicted person looks for the lesson in the hardship and has faith that God will see to it that all will turn out for the best. Adversity tests faith. Faith during clear sailing is easy. Faith when the sky is dark and the winds are high is true faith. There is no adversity that God cannot turn to the benefit of the suffering individual. In fact, a life of leisure is, or can be, a life of stagnation. Many times angels will throw up a few roadblocks just to test the mettle and strengthen the character of the individual.

"So don't neglect to teach of adversity and its many facets and attributes. It is a topic of great interest to humans, especially those in the midst of trouble. People are now beginning to recognize their own inability to go it alone and have reached out to God, so for that reason alone adversities serve a good purpose, especially now when many people still cling to the cult of individuality. Remind them that no one can traverse the path on their own.

"Encourage them to rely on God for support."

7

Vincent was reading some of the transcripts Ray had sent him, of Roland's private session with Ham. Roland couldn't resist asking Ham about several financial transactions he was contemplating. Ham reminded him that the teacher could not live the mortal's life for him, that Roland had to make his own decisions, that decisions are opportunities for growth. At each crossroad, Ham encouraged Roland to seek within and then choose the highest path.

This made Vincent laugh. He decided to pick up the phone and introduce himself to Roland and give him some grief over the questions. The two hit it off immediately and laughed at the absurdity of many of the questions the others had asked. Their discussion also gave Vincent the opportunity to get feedback from someone who had actually attended the meetings.

Roland asked about the couple on Greenbriar Road.



Vincent had pulled out a city map but could find no Greenbriar Road. He studied a county map, but still no Greenbriar Road. Not that he knew what he might do if he found out—knock on every door and tell any couple who answered the door that Ham sent him? He was stymied. But the group in Utah had somehow

found every Greenbriar Road in Florida and alerted Vincent to them. The closest was two hundred and fifty miles away from where Vincent lived in Tallahassee. Surely that couldn't be it, could it?

At this time Vincent had only read the Urantia Book by himself. He knew no one locally who read it despite his efforts to meet others. Nonetheless the Utah group, figuring it couldn't hurt, sent him the name of someone in his area who had information about a nearby reading group. Vincent made a note of it and decided to give them a call.



The friendship between Roland and Vincent grew in the course of their phone conversations. Wanting to meet in person, they decided that Roland would schedule a private meeting with Ham for Vincent, and Vincent would fly out on one of his free frequent flyer tickets. He would stay with Roland, so it wouldn't cost a thing. Vincent began devising a list of tough questions for Ham to answer. He would see what this teacher was about and also would flush out a scam if the woman transmitting him was making it all up.

Meanwhile, he called the local Tallahassee Urantia Book study group about attending one of their meetings, and was told he would first need to be screened and approved by a couple who weeded out undesirables.

He made an appointment.

8

Machiventa Melchizedek began his lesson to the teachers.

“Our lesson today is on tolerance. Much of the strife on this planet is a result of intolerance of others’ beliefs and customs. Tolerance is born of the knowledge that the road to God is broad and that each has his or her own path. It is not the job of humans to judge their fellows; in fact, their attempts to do so are woefully inadequate. Of course, society’s rules and regulations are another matter. But from a spiritual perspective mortals must have faith that God will be capable of dealing with all situations.

“Tolerance also results from the knowledge that most people, after death, will progress to the next stage of existence. Much intolerance is bred by well-meaning religionists who, claiming exclusive truth, believe that all others are lost. From their perspective all means of converting non-believers are worth the cost—even if the conversion has to be beaten into their fellows. You may be surprised, but your students will be inclined, from time to time, to lord over others the knowledge you impart. Such is not God’s way. Any teaching must first be applied in their daily lives. Our message will transform their lives, and the transformations will demonstrate to others that the students are onto something. If our message does not change our students for the better, how could it possibly be of interest to others? So, we first focus on the individual path of our students. Public ministry must wait. It will not be effective anyway until the foundation is laid. Even then we

teach only from a positive perspective. There is no need to belittle another's beliefs, no matter how erroneous. Truth will be apparent. Remember, there are many barriers on this Earth. We are not here to knock them down, but, instead, to raise the tide of love so it flows over them. Keep this in mind. We will build bridges, we won't tear down walls."

"Class dismissed!"



Ron and Cathy greeted Vincent and asked him to have a seat in their living room. The purpose of his visit was so they could decide whether he would be allowed to attend their Urantia Book study group. When you are reading such a text in a group you are rightfully concerned that crazies don't descend upon you, thought Vincent, so he was on his best behavior. He told them how long he had been reading—not long compared to the twenty or thirty years of some of the members. He told them that he was a lawyer (not necessarily a positive attribute) and about his wife and children. This information seemed to put them at ease.

At the same time, Vincent was checking *them* out. Ron and Cathy, like all of the members, worked for a living, had families, and were stable, normal-looking people. No den of witches or cultists here, he observed. They told him a little about the group. It was small—between six and twelve members—mostly married couples and all long-time readers of the Urantia Book. Well, thought Vincent, if nothing else, at least I will meet some people who read and actually *like* the Urantia Book.

Vincent was about to leave when he decided to venture out a bit. "Have you heard about any strange activity in New Zealand?" he asked them. They looked at each other apprehensively. Yes, they had received a few transcripts of alleged celestial teachers, as had many readers of the Urantia Book, because the New Zealanders, when they found out about the Urantia Book, had somehow obtained a mailing list of known readers and sent transcripts to all of them. Ron pointed out that the quality of the transmissions was nowhere near that of the Urantia Book's, and that

the Urantia Book readership was, for the most part, extremely skeptical if not downright hostile about the whole phenomenon.

When asked if they had heard about the Utah teacher lessons, they said they hadn't but cautioned Vincent against mentioning it at their next meeting.

Vincent agreed not to say a word, but he was intrigued.



Although all were from the local universe of Nebadon, each teacher had his or her own distinctive personality and style. They also had unique perspectives on this mission and prepared their lessons from those perspectives. Daniel, for instance, had been a teacher when he was a mortal, and his lessons showed it. Some had worked in the home, some had been laborers, others doctors—you name it. Although at present only Ham had an active group, many of the teachers knew where their prospective groups were located and would attempt, from time to time, to make contact.

Their efforts were initially unsuccessful because few humans took time out for periods of stillness and quiet, and talking to them during their chaotic workdays was nearly impossible. The humans on this world seemed always to be occupied. If they weren't, they would turn on a TV or a radio. Silence was not a culturally encouraged phenomenon. The people were constantly bombarded with advertising encouraging the purchase of material goods. In fact, wealth accumulation along with an obsession for youth and thin bodies was the primary concern of a large portion of the population while others in the world starved.

What a mixed-up planet, thought the teachers. The people have missed the point. Greed, selfishness and lust ruled their hearts. It would not be an easy task to educate them. And yet, the teachers knew that the hunger for the truth was there. After all, God resided in each of them.



Vincent arrived at the Urantia Book study group meeting and was greeted by Ron and Cathy. They introduced him to Bruce

and Judi, at whose house the meeting was being held, and to David and Jill, a couple in their forties. Bruce served a dinner of fresh fish he had caught that morning. Everyone brought a dish to share, and Vincent had picked up some coleslaw on the way over. It was a cordial group. After dinner they brought out their Urantia Books and sat in a circle to read an entire paper, with each person reading a couple of paragraphs aloud. If someone had a comment or question, the group would stop and hash it out. This was a new and fun experience for Vincent.

After the reading they were socializing when, to Vincent's surprise, Ron reported what Vincent had told him earlier about the people in Utah and asked Vincent to give more details. Vincent, while disclaiming any personal opinions or conclusions regarding the validity of what was going on, stated what he knew. He then related the story of his search for the couple on Greenbriar Road.

David and Jill listened with stunned looks on their faces and Vincent caught them exchanging knowing glances.

9

It was late October, 1991, prior to the Utah meeting Roland and Vincent planned to attend together. They had often talked on the phone about the exciting possibilities of the mission, wondering if it was all true, but Vincent had been expressing concern about the effect it would have on his family. Roland reminded him that Jesus had had to take care of his family before he could go about his business of public ministry, so how could this mission hurt anyone's family? That made sense to both of them, but they debated it anyway.

Roland had been practicing early morning stillness, which he often maintained for hours at a time. His life as a bachelor greatly facilitated this activity, yet he had never managed to hear anything. That morning, however, at around 3 a.m., he awoke with a start and felt compelled to write Vincent a letter assuring him that this mission would not interfere with raising his family and that he, Vincent, was indeed part of the mission. Roland added that he was inspired to write down his thoughts, and felt that the inspiring celestial had been a woman in her material life.

Vincent smiled when he received the letter. That Roland! What a wild guy! he thought. But he liked the sentiments expressed and looked forward to the Utah trip. Lucy, Vincent's wife, was skeptical and wanted to go along to make sure he didn't do something wacky. But Vincent had only one free ticket, so instead she made him promise he wouldn't give away all their worldly pos-

sessions or shave his head. Vincent laughed and assured her that he would do no such things.



Machiventa addressed the teachers for their daily pep talk. "Good morning. I hope you all are enjoying your stay here on Earth. With your ability to traverse the planet almost instantaneously, you should be able to get a good understanding of the problems that we face in the successful execution of this ministry.

"We have selected North America to commence this process in earnest because it is not presently under siege, its people are educated and have free time, and the Urantia Book has made its greatest penetration there. Eventually this mission will spread throughout the world, but for now we need a foothold.

"We are working diligently with the angels and others to position people where they will have the opportunity to choose to become involved. It is frustrating, because most people walk around in a fog, only interested in their next task. But remember, we have been secretly working with many of these folks since they were young. We will succeed, but not necessarily in the manner we originally thought. Flexibility is important in this Teaching Mission, as is improvisation. Keep working at contacting humans. We will assist in any way we can, but we are prohibited from interfering in any way with their free will.

"Okay, let's get out there and keep working."

10

Vincent looked at David and Jill expectantly, but they continued to stare at each other in shock. “Well,” demanded Vincent finally, “tell us about Greenbriar Road.”

David started. “It was seventeen years ago. We had only been married for a couple of years and were living in an apartment that was perfectly satisfactory for us. Then, inexplicably, Jill told me she felt the need to move. Wanting to be amenable to her needs, I told her to start looking around. She found an apartment complex with two vacancies. It was located on a busy street and we had small children, but even so, she chose the unit closest to the road—she felt strongly about it. Not long after we moved in, someone visiting our next-door neighbor introduced us to the Urantia Book and we have been reading it ever since. The apartments were named the Greenbriar Apartments.”

Vincent began whistling the theme song from “The Twilight Zone” and everyone started laughing. Then he told them he was going to Utah to check this out.



The teachers watched as Vincent’s little melodrama played out. They were giddy with excitement. It worked! He’d found the answer to the Greenbriar puzzle. They had debated whether to be more specific, but correctly reasoned that Vincent would be more

impressed by his own sleuthing. When he arrived in Utah, his story would serve as a faith promoter for the people there as well. It wasn't often that their celestial machinations worked so well, but there was more to do to bring about the desired chain of events.



Vincent worked diligently on the questions he wanted to ask Ham. He focused on free will. Why was the rebellion isolated—so others wouldn't be advised of Lucifer and Satan's position? What would have been the consequences of allowing diverse points of view to be considered? He also wanted to know about the plan for the mission so he could evaluate it and offer suggestions. He knew human behavior and perhaps they could use his mortal perspective. The list of questions grew longer as the plane got closer to Salt Lake City. It was July, so he was expecting nice weather.

He had arranged to be picked up by Roland, who had offered to escort him around. Vincent would be carrying a *Urantia* Book and they would recognize each other by the descriptions they had given of themselves—Roland in his early fifties, Vincent in his late thirties, both with beards, both graying. They spotted each other at baggage claim, shook hands, collected Vincent's bags, and headed out to the parking lot toward Roland's beat-up Volvo. They connected at once, talking and laughing non-stop as they drove into town for lunch. Roland cracked up at Vincent's good-humored jabs about the celestials, but each was excited at the possibilities. If what the celestials said was true, it was the beginning of a massive effort to bring Earth into spiritual enlightenment—the Correcting Time, the celestials called it—and they, Roland and Vincent, had a chance to be involved from the beginning. Or were they deluding themselves, so intent upon helping the world change and so ego-driven that they falsely assumed they had been called into duty? The world certainly needed changing, no one could deny that. Newspapers reflected the malaise, the suffering, the hatred, the greed, the injustice and the violence taking place all over the world. It was too much. It had to change.

That night Vincent met some of the other members of the group. They cooked out on the grill at Roland's house. Roland's son-in-law Ray came over with his family. Everyone was in a festive mood. They all loved the Greenbriar Road story and were excited that someone from outside Utah had come to visit. Things were happening. This must be a sign that the mission is for real, they all agreed.

Rebecca, the woman who could actually hear celestials, came to the cookout and, just as Ray had described her, appeared to be sincere and forthright. She was in her thirties, with brown hair, big brown eyes and a ready smile. No compensation was asked, which pleased Vincent since he was wary of scams in these matters—and there had been many such scams. Mediums, televangelists and others who offered salvation for money always concerned him. In the Middle Ages a man named Tetzel offered “indulgences” so a person could be forgiven, in advance, for sins—for a fee, of course. That episode contributed to the Protestant Reformation. Scammers have always loved religion, where faith could be invoked to overcome logic. But Vincent detected none of that in Rebecca, nor in any of the other participants. As they left the party, Rebecca confirmed their private meeting for the next morning.

Vincent and Roland stayed up into the night talking.

The next morning Vincent woke up early—he had gained two hours changing time zones—and went outside to climb a small foothill near the house. The sun was just coming up over the mountains. Standing there, he raised his arms to the sky and asked to know God's will and for the strength to follow it. He also asked for a good experience with Ham and tried a little stillness practice.

During breakfast he decided to ask Ham for a parable to take home to the kids.



Rebecca lived on the outskirts of Salt Lake City. Roland had been there before and headed the Volvo in her general direction. Vincent, checking the gas gauge, asked if maybe they shouldn't

put some gas into the car. "No," Roland assured him. "We can run for years on the fumes. Shoot, with this amount of gas we could drive to L.A.!" After driving around in circles for forty-five minutes it looked as if Roland's assertion would be put to the test.

"You idiot!" shouted Vincent in jest over the roar of the road from the open windows. "I fly all the way out here and you get us lost going to meet Rebecca. I hope Ham has plenty of time to cool his heels."

A gas station appeared and Roland pulled into it. "Chill out, big boy," he said, "That's what they make phones for."

"Hey, I have an idea, no doubt celestially imparted," countered Vincent with mock sarcasm. "Let's put fifty cents worth of gas in this junkmobile so you'll be set for the next decade." Their self-deprecating and caustic jibes belied the growing bond between them.

As Vincent pumped gas, Roland got directions to the house. Back on the road, Vincent asked Roland what had happened to his gas cap, having noticed it missing. "Oh, I lost it a while back," said Roland, "but the little flap protects it." About this time Vincent noted that they were passing the same park they had passed a few minutes earlier.

"Number one, the 'little flap', as you so technically describe it, does not protect your engine from water intrusion. It is no doubt rusting out as we speak. And number two, whether you admit it or not, and despite the extremely long odds against it, you are lost again." A sheepish grin crossed Roland's face.

"Were you on the Titanic?" Vincent cried out. "Pull over and let me make a phone call."

Despite the detours, they were right on time when they pulled up to Rebecca's modest house. She was there, as was a man named Thern who would be recording the session. Thern was an older member of the Utah group whose whole family was involved. After a short exchange of pleasantries, they went into Rebecca's living room. Vincent also brought a tape recorder.

Rebecca got comfortable, closed her eyes, and they waited.

11

Lucy and her friend were walking to their first day of class in college when Lucy stopped and pointed to a boy entering the room where her political science class was to be held.

"See that boy?" she remarked.

"Yeah, what about him?" responded her friend.

"That is the man I am going to marry!" Lucy flatly pronounced.

"What!?" You don't even know him!"

"True, but I just know that we will be married," Lucy insisted with a casual shrug of her shoulders.

Vincent was unaware of this exchange and didn't find out about it until many years later when he and Lucy were married and had kids. But from the moment she told him, he believed he and Lucy had been connected for a special purpose.



Lucy didn't know what to make of all this. Vincent had not only been against organized religion for as long as she had known him, but he had been a major hedonist as well. He could have done any number of things—become an alcoholic, chased other women—and she wouldn't have been surprised, but this was totally unexpected. A mid-life crisis, perhaps?

Although Vincent had told her much about the Urantia Book, she had no desire to read it. The book itself seemed benign enough

to her, but she was worried that she would one day find Vincent at the airport, in saffron robes, chanting, and trying to sell Urantia Books. It was the uncertainty that bothered her. But she gave him the freedom to chase this dream, realizing that she probably couldn't have stopped him anyway. At least he had started being nice rather than his usual sarcastic self. Before finding the Urantia Book he loved nothing better than insulting her co-workers and embarrassing her. Something had changed him—for the better.

She asked him where his evil twin had gone.

12

"Hello, Ham. My name is Vincent. I have read transcripts of your lessons and have come to ask how I may be of service to this mission."

"Greetings, Vincent. We are glad you made the trip, despite the fact that you do not know why you are here. You will be pivotal in the early stages of this Teaching Mission. I would like to introduce you now to your teacher, Will, who will work with your group in Florida."

Vincent sat stunned. He didn't know why he was here? Intriguing. He would be pivotal? Doubtful, but it did appeal to his elitist attitude. He liked being on the cutting edge of whatever he was involved in. And who is this Will? The Florida group, however, was hardly interested in this, so their acceptance of a teacher seemed unlikely.

"Hello, I am Will. I would like you to go back and tell your group to open their hearts and I will come there to be their teacher."

"Whoa, Will! These folks don't even know me and are skeptical of this type of communication, as am I. How am I supposed to convince them of this?"

"You will think of something," Will replied.

"Hey," asked Vincent, "were David and Jill the couple on Greenbriar Road?"

"Yes."

"Do you have a message for Jill?"

"Tell her it is our desire that she become increasingly strong until she shines like a light from above. That is all."

"Hello, this is Ham again. You had questions?"

Vincent numbly went through his list of prepared questions. Ham dutifully answered each one, except for the request for a new parable, which Ham said he would think about. This was more than Vincent had bargained for. Instead of testing the Teaching Mission, he had been enlisted into it. Instead of evaluating it, he had been given the job of selling it to a group of strangers back home. He didn't even know if he believed in it himself.



The next night, at the meeting of the Utah group, Will gave a message which included the parable Vincent had requested:

"I have chosen to speak of spirituality as a process of making something rough into something precious. For example, a diamond embedded in the earth must first be sought out and extracted. When it is brought forth it does not at all resemble its later state; rather, it looks like any other rock you might find in passing. The kingdom of heaven is like the man who seeks and finds this rough rock, then buffs and grinds the roughness away to reveal a diamond. But still his work is not complete. For the diamond, to be truly precious, must be cut with precision. It must be polished. It must be displayed in a beautiful setting. All this is the action of the kingdom of heaven. Such a diamond will reflect the greatest light, showing its true brilliance and value to all who behold it."

Vincent was impressed. Even his children appreciated the parable when he brought it back to them.



Before leaving Utah, Vincent obtained a full set of Ham's transcripts as well as tapes of his private session and of the group meeting. He said farewell to Roland and boarded a plane home. On the flight he began keeping a diary so he could record the events as they happened. Truth or scam, it was all very interesting indeed.



Machiventa brought the meeting to order. He congratulated Ham and Will for their preparation and presentation. They had correctly read Vincent and presented the concept of the Teaching Mission to him in a way that generated positive action on his part.

"But don't get over-confident. Don't expect this work to be so easy every time. For every success there are ten failures. Patience will be necessary. Humans are still mostly animal and are very unpredictable. Their egos generally dominate them. Vincent, in fact, is largely motivated by his desire to know things others don't know, so we use his weakness for positive action.

"Still, the expansion of the teacher groups has begun. A California prospect will be arriving in Utah within the next few weeks. Everyone, keep preparing for your groups. We will try and get a messenger or a message to them as soon as possible."



Back in Florida, Vincent copied the Ham transcripts and left a set with each of the three couples who had attended the only Urantia Book study group meeting he had gone to. David sternly told Vincent that if anything in the transcripts didn't jibe with the Urantia Book, Vincent would be out of there. Vincent replied that he was not promoting this, just providing information, and hinted at a surprise for the next meeting. David informed him he'd be on vacation and would probably only have a chance to read a few of the transcripts. Vincent assumed David would have *more* time to read during his vacation, but shrugged and said, "Fine."

The next day Vincent got an urgent call from David. "I must see you," said David. Vincent agreed to meet him that night after the kids were asleep—about nine p.m. David admitted that he had been up half the previous night reading the transcripts. He seemed interested.

That night, David requested to hear the tapes. Vincent put them on and Rebecca's voice came over the speakers. She spoke one word at a time, slowly and deliberately. It would be hard, at that slow pace, to keep track of where you were in a sentence,

much less fake it. And what would be her motive? No money was requested. No fame was sought. David was satisfied and talked with Vincent on into the night.

At the next Sunday meeting, Vincent arrived late. He had brought his boombox with the tape set to play Will's statements when he pressed the play button. He was surprised at the number of cars outside Bruce and Judi's house. Inside were twice as many people as at the last meeting. After introducing himself to the new faces, Vincent told them his story, starting with how he found the Urantia Book, followed by the Greenbriar Road episode and his experiences on his recent trip to Utah.

Someone had copied the transcripts and passed them around, and many of the new people were studying them. After his talk, Vincent plugged in the boombox. He was ready for the grand finale. Being a lawyer didn't hurt his presentation; he had a knack for timing. He pushed the play button and Will began to speak. "I will be the teacher of your group. Tell them to open their hearts and I will be there."

The group's eyes grew wide and, after the message was over, they decided to begin meeting weekly to see what would happen.

They didn't know it at the time, but they had embarked on the adventure of their lives.

13

Machiventa addressed the teachers at their daily meeting.

“This world will change, but only one person at a time. It will change when people desire to change themselves. It will change when people recognize the truth in these and other teachings and decide of their own free will to change. People will choose lasting values. The family will again be the building block. Greed and selfishness will melt away. It will not be necessary to attack and destroy hatred; we will emphasize the positive and, hopefully, the disruptive and shortsighted pursuits will lose their attractiveness and be seen for what they are—destructive behavior.

“Love will be the basis for the change. Although we are in the service of God, we will not speak much about God directly. Many barriers are associated with God on this world. People fight and kill each other over their interpretation of God. They argue over the name of God. They argue over the race of God. They argue over the gender of God. They argue that they are the ‘chosen people’ of God. They believe that God is a wrathful deity. They attribute all manner of ills to the failure of people to do God’s will—as they define it. They judge each other on their interpretation of God’s will. They are intolerant of any path that is not their own. In short, the mere mention of God is a barrier to many.

“It rarely dawns on the people of this planet that God is a loving God; that all people are God’s children; that God is neither black, white, male or female, but *all* of those things and more. He

created this world; he could have made it perfect, but instead He wanted His children to learn as they grow. God gave each person in this world a piece of Himself, to reside within them. It is the task of this Teaching Mission to encourage a personal relationship with the God within.

"We will not erect temples or appoint priests. We will ask all to be tolerant of one another, to live their lives in an unselfish, non-judgmental manner with loving concern for others and unselfish service as their motive. We will ask that all take time each day to spend in the stillness, listening for and to God. We believe that only by exhibiting love through every word, action and deed can this world be transformed. Talk is cheap, and there is—and has always been—more talk than action. It is time for action. We must convey that to our students. Since we are invisible, the humans must initiate the process. Others are already living their lives in this fashion. They must be joined. This world must change. All know that the planet has reached a critical juncture. We will not fail.

"That is all for this time."

14

There were even more people at the next meeting. Vincent said, “Well, since no one has heard from Will, what should we do?”

Jill hesitated, then shyly spoke up: “I’ve heard from her!”

This surprised everyone, but especially Vincent. He had been afraid that *he* might be the one to hear from her. That would have caused problems. His job was to bring a message; for him to also be the transmitter would smack of scam. But when Jill heard from Will, he was convinced—and relieved. He didn’t think hearing celestial teachers would go over too well with his law partners—not that participating in this mission would sit well with them, either. Luckily they were more interested in secular matters.

Will, in her message, had welcomed everyone and invited them to listen to the teachings and incorporate them into their lives. Jill had written the message down and, in reading it to the group, it was plain that she had yet to master the verbal delivery. Still, the group was ecstatic as they contemplated the possibilities. Over the many years they had been meeting, petty antagonisms had developed and when Vincent arrived the group was small and only met once a month; tonight fifteen were in attendance and their differences seemed unimportant when compared with the opportunity to help change the world.

Of course, not all were swept away by this first contact. Bruce, especially, had promised himself that he would keep his feet on

the ground so that at least one person would remain objective. This whole development was pretty bizarre to him.

Nobody was arguing with that.

15

Machiventa once again quieted the teachers in preparation for his lesson. There was a buzz in the air. A second group was being taught! Others had scheduled trips to Utah. It would only be a matter of time before things really got rolling. The teachers all anxiously awaited the time when their groups would come together.

“Ladies and gentlemen, today we will speak of exercises that will help your groups incorporate our teachings into their lives.

“Humans tend to be dilatory and forgetful. While they may get excited for a while and try to change their lives, once the thrill is gone they lapse into old habits. This can be very frustrating, but is to be expected. Today I would like to begin with the first in a series of exercises you can relay to your groups that will help them remember. By intermittently suggesting these, they will not only be reminded but will have variety, and this will keep the experience fresh for them. These exercises will build on each other. The stillness practice is the foundation for all of them, because communication with God is the spark that will transform these people, this planet. Exercises are the physical manifestations of a spirit-led life.

“The first exercise is what we call the 1-2-3 exercise. Because most of the groups are presently Christian-trained mortals, we will use Jesus as the contemplated personality, though Jesus can be substituted by whoever they believe represents the highest example of a life lived in the spirit. Have them visualize the following three steps:

“Step one. Jesus has come to visit you today and will accompany you throughout the day. You will, by your every thought, word and deed, demonstrate to Jesus that you understand his teachings and are incorporating them into your lives. Every encounter will be an opportunity for such a demonstration, no matter how seemingly insignificant.

“Step two. You will, throughout the day, act as a conduit for the Father’s love. The more love you give away, the more that will be available for further distribution. Each day is to be met cheerfully with a smile and a sparkle in your eye.

“Step three. You will perform these acts without sarcasm, approaching your activities with the proper respect. This will be the hardest part for many people, as they use humor to deflect the seriousness of their activities. But it is necessary that steps one and two not be demeaned. Humor is appreciated, but only when appropriate.

“Let’s see if our students can do the 1-2-3 exercise for a while. When they are ready I will give you the next exercise for them to try.”



Roland and the Utah group were overjoyed to hear that Will had arrived in Florida. The seed they had planted had sprouted. They were excited by their role and mailed tapes to many of the other Urantia Book reader groups advising them of what was going on. Soon Rayson began teaching a California group and Daniel an Idaho group. Utah was the hub of activity from which the spokes began to radiate in different directions. A visitor from Tampa, a long-time Urantia Book reader named Desmond, had come to Utah asking for a teacher. While there, he was given Vincent’s number so they could connect upon his return to Florida.

Roland and Vincent continued to burn up the phone lines. Roland, not having been a long-time Urantia Book reader or member of the Utah group prior to Ham’s arrival, was considered somewhat of an outsider, and his involvement was resented by some. The group had set up a nonprofit corporation and named twenty or so members to its board of directors, but hadn’t seen fit to

include Roland. Vincent drew up the Articles of Incorporation for them and then argued strenuously to prevent any members from appointing themselves to lifetime positions as they had wanted to do. It just demonstrated the difficulty of dealing with even well-intentioned people. Roland and Vincent laughed about it and were especially amused when they imagined what the celestial teachers must be going through.

Already people wanted to be big shots. Happens every time. No wonder the teachers didn't want to set up a new religion. It would quickly deteriorate into another series of dogmas, rituals and hierarchies. They liked the idea of a personal relationship with God without all the trappings of an organized religion.



The next time Vincent had business in Tampa, he dropped by to spend a couple of hours comparing notes with Desmond, the reader who had heard about him on his trip to Utah, and his wife. Desmond was a publisher and had three small children. He was still skeptical about the whole affair (who wasn't?) but had at least made the effort to fly to Utah. He had been promised a teacher, but his group was even less interested than the Tallahassee group had been. Vincent had enjoyed the advantage of being a stranger. Desmond, they all knew. His story was easier to discount, and they had.



Vincent's group continued to meet weekly and Jill had learned to verbalize Will's messages. At first Will emphasized seeking the stillness daily. Soon, however, another member, Eric, excitedly reported that he had spoken to God within him. Will gently informed Eric that he had actually talked with *her*, not God. Now there were two who could hear her and it was just as well. Jill was clearly uncomfortable with the stress it had put upon her and began deferring to Eric. At one meeting, Will jumped from Jill to Eric, who finished the message. Everyone was trying to hear Will, but she told them it probably wouldn't happen. Hearing teach-

ers, she explained, had absolutely no spiritual significance. Some people could do it, others couldn't. But they all kept trying anyway, and everyone was attempting the 1-2-3 exercise each day. Vincent enlisted his secretary to type up Will's lessons, which he handed out at the meetings. As a consequence, his secretary was also becoming interested in the teachings. Vincent had heard her talking about them to other secretaries at the office.

People who knew Vincent were commenting on the changes in him. Each week the Teaching Mission group would get together and describe their latest experiences and how they had reacted to them. Funny thing—his group started acting more and more like a family.

They all listened to one another's stories and laughed and cried together.

16

Will and the other teachers liked to go down to the bridge and listen to Vincent's comments; they found him to be a good barometer.

Vincent wanted to know "the plan" so he could reflect on it and provide his perspective on its likelihood of success. Often Machiventa would drop in at the bridge; he enjoyed listening to Vincent. But he began to get irritated by Vincent's repeated requests to know the plan. Vincent was even going over their heads and petitioning Michael about it. Michael heard Vincent's petition, as he always does when mortals address him, and contacted Machiventa to ask that he answer Vincent's questions. Machiventa contacted Eric and gave his response, to be relayed to Vincent.

"These mortals!" sighed Machiventa.



One thing the celestials had to continually monitor was the effect of these unusual communications on the humans involved. After all, history had proven that premature knowledge from celestial sources invariably caused problems. Some people would believe that they had been "chosen" and then demand to be worshiped. Some became intolerant and tried to coerce others into seeing the universal plan in the same way they did. Some were

not psychologically capable of handling such a break with their perceived reality and became unbalanced. This mission would not be any different. Already some enthusiasts had considered quitting their jobs, selling their possessions and going out to preach the message. But the teachers immediately and firmly cautioned against such extreme reactions.

"This message is designed to change people from the inside out. The physical circumstances will not necessarily change, but the people will change when their attitudes become more loving and less fearful. Obviously, people will still need to earn a living even when they fully embrace this mission. But they will be different and people will notice. And that is how the message will be spread from one person to another—by example. If our message is not powerful enough to transform people, then it should not be believed. But we have no fear. It will, despite its simple nature, be the agent of change for this planet. So go forth, and in every seemingly mundane transaction shine forth the lessons that we have given you. Then see if you can perceive a difference in your relationships with those you encounter."

And so, the human students continued to be disappointed that the message would not be proclaimed in the media but would instead be part of a gentle and unobtrusive change that would slowly begin to stop the slide and foster the upward climb. Dramatic changes were not the way of the universe. Rather, the transformations were slow and deliberate, but consistent. And this was another lesson for the students to accept and embrace, as hard as it was for them. After all, they wanted action, and they wanted it now!



Eric called Vincent to say he had received a message for him. Vincent was intrigued. Why was he getting a personal message? Eric had transcribed it and dropped the envelope off at the office, and Vincent eagerly opened it. It was from Machiventa:

"The plan is not such that you would recognize it. Michael is the conductor of a great symphony. He knows not if the instruments in the orchestra will perform or not or whether they will be

defective. It matters not. He is the master of improvisation. As the tune develops, the plan changes. Your job is to be prepared. When the plectrum strikes your key you will have the opportunity to add to the music and the music shall ring out—across the universe.”

Okay, okay, thought Vincent. I'll stop trying to help with the plan and get ready to do my part. But he hadn't told Eric of his prayer prior to Eric's receiving the message from Machiventa.

Vincent was excited that his prayers were actually being heard.

17

“Today’s lesson is on attitude and faith. These two go hand in hand. Faith is the belief that God is working in your life and will turn all events into opportunities for learning. Faith is the belief that God is also working in each person’s life on this planet. This faith should give you a positive attitude toward life. There is no need to be exasperated by the events of life. Make the most of all encounters. Be of good cheer. Have a friendly countenance. Be assured. When this life is viewed as an educational experience and death is viewed as the close of the first chapter of an eternal life, all concerns are softened.”

Will concluded her message to her group. She was beginning to know them and appreciate them more and more. They would be ready for a new exercise soon. Until then, she reminded them that they were bathed in God’s love and encouraged them to continue to take ten minutes each day to spend in silence.

She called it the “stillness.”

18

Eric and David were having independent anxiety attacks. David, for the last several days, had also been hearing celestials. The speakers were allegedly his seraphim—the celestial guardians assigned to mortals during their lives, who usually work in pairs. These loving beings are closer to humans than most other celestials and are very empathetic toward their charges. David had first heard them when his cable TV was on the blink, so instead of watching the morning news he meditated and was shocked to hear a lesson from the celestials. This went on for several days until he became concerned and depressed about the whole affair and its veracity.

Meanwhile, Eric, who had been transmitting Will's lessons for the group, was considering quitting. People were starting to believe what was coming out of his mouth and he became uneasy when he noticed them relying on what he said. It was simply too great a responsibility. After much thought he wrote a goodbye note, then went to visit David. They commiserated about their doubts and eventually agreed to notify the others that they could not be held personally accountable in these matters. Everyone would have to decide for themselves whether there was truth in the messages and not rely upon the transmitter's credibility or lack thereof.

When Eric left David's house, they both felt much better.

19

“There is something about humans that causes them to seek outward manifestations of celestial presences. Perhaps it has to do with the logical, empirical constructs of their lives here on Earth. They also want to be healed, advised, and relieved of having to use their free will. Certain churches have recognized these needs and have gladly accommodated them. That is why theologies which strictly proscribe activities have been so popular throughout history. People, by and large, prefer not to exercise their free will. Yet they do so every day in each small decision about how they interact with those they meet. For some reason, people divorce those small acts from their theology. Yet, that’s where the magic lies—in the everyday, in the mundane, in the commonplace.

“Historically, ‘miracles’ and other extraordinary events have not had long-term beneficial effects on the witnesses. Many become fanatics. Most misinterpret the events. Few gain positively with regard to spiritual advancement. Even Michael had trouble with this when he lived on this earth as Jesus. As you know, this universe and all others are vast educational institutions. Each personality must learn experientially from each step of the process until he or she is ready to be embraced by God on Paradise. These humans are on the lowest rung of the ladder. And because they are from a rebellion planet, they have little understanding of the ascension plan.

"Remember faith. You, too, must have faith that all things will work for the best. Even the rebellion will prove to have a silver lining."

"Keep up the good work. The number of groups continues to expand. We have booked time, several months from now, on the universe circuits, to officially announce the commencement of the Correcting Time on Michael's home planet. The ratings will be high. The universe watches in anxious anticipation."



It was hard for Vincent to believe that this gentle plan could change things. The celestials continued to assert that small acts of kindness would transform the world. Although he doubted it, he stuck with his promise to stay out of the management of the plan, and worked on being nice to those he encountered.

To change the world—almost laughable! But the growth of the Teaching Mission was impressive. Its fruits were good. He continued to stick with it. He continued to promote it. He continued to seek the stillness daily.



Will quickly gave the group new exercises. The first was a listening exercise. "Each person," she explained, "must be approached from their own perspective and belief system. No one can successfully convey God's love if they try to break down another's vision of truth. Therefore, before you can impart much of your truth, you must first listen. Most people don't really listen, they just wait for a break in the conversation so they can express their own thoughts. It is easy to see that not much communicating gets done in that scenario—yet it is the dominant pattern today.

"So, listen," Will advised her charges. "Truly listen and watch for other types of communication—body language, inflections, facial movements. Learn to discern what the person is trying to say, regardless of their words. Do them the service of listening—they don't want to hear what you have to say, anyway. So this week get out there and be quiet. Listen to your brothers and sisters."



Although some members of Will's group tried to do the exercises and would take ten minutes a day to seek the stillness, others would leave the meetings and immediately fall back into their old patterns. No real effort was made to remember to try. Will was upset. Really upset. She took it up with the Melchizedeks. She complained about her group's indolence, their lack of motivation, their selfishness. She didn't know what to do. Here she was, giving the group the opportunity to assist the higher beings in one of the most exciting times in the history of the planet, and they just couldn't seem to get past their everyday habits and routines. The Melchizedeks commiserated, but couldn't offer much advice except to suggest that she take the problem to Michael. She was surprised by the advice and, although she had never been in Michael's direct presence, she decided to do just that.

Going to the Creator of the universe to complain about some of his creatures is indeed an unusual thing to do. Will was hesitant but determined. Michael graciously welcomed her and listened patiently as she outlined the problem for him. She was certain he would also be disappointed that these humans could not focus for even a week on an exercise—even forgetting to commune with the Father in the stillness! She was convinced that Michael would have a solution. After all, he himself had lived in the flesh on this very planet. After presenting her case and expressing her righteous indignation, Will waited for Michael's response.

Michael looked away for a moment, then turned and gazed directly into Will's eyes, smiling a smile that carried with it more love than Will had ever felt. Michael said, "What do you expect? They are humans." He paused for a moment, then added, "I understand."

Will was taken aback. Michael then told her about his life on Earth. It had been tough, gritty, and difficult, and he was finally put to death on trumped-up charges. Yes, humans were difficult. That's why this Teaching Mission was a challenge. Will had lived her mortal life on a much more advanced planet, whose people had already abolished war and conquered disease. She had never experienced life as it was being lived on Earth at this time. When

Michael said, "I understand," Will almost felt ashamed. She returned with a clearer understanding and a resolve to better teach her students.

At the next meeting of the group she spoke of her conference with Michael. She said she would try to understand them like Michael did, but once more she encouraged the group to take ten minutes—only ten minutes!—per day to seek the stillness. Some took it to heart, some didn't.

After all, they are only human. What do you expect?

20

By 1992 the Teaching Mission had gained a foothold, and its participants were ready to announce the commencement of the first active phase of the Correcting Time. The Los Angeles Urantia Book Society—not a Teaching Mission group—was hosting a regional conference but refused to allow any mention of the teachers, much less give them a spot on the agenda. Because of this, the Teaching Mission group booked a separate meeting room in a nearby hotel and invited all the conference attendees to come and hear an important message from a celestial teacher.

Because resistance was high among Urantia Book traditionalists, it took more than a little courage for someone to come forward and provide a voice for the announcement. Rebecca finally agreed to undertake the task, and a contingent of the Woods Cross group accompanied her to Los Angeles, among them Roland, Joshua, James, and Jerimiah. Ron and Cathy from the Florida group also flew out. Despite the negative attitude among the Urantia Book readers, over a hundred and fifty turned up to witness the occasion, many with open minds and many whose minds were closed to the possible truth of these contacts.

On February 1, 1992, Ham spoke to those gathered:

“My profound and sincere greetings to you all this evening. I am Ham. I have been commissioned to bring the light of truth and the understanding of our Father to this planet. I am one of many teachers.

"All of us are awaiting the greater reception of our words and are desirous of placing many teachers among you. Great is our mission. Understand this in your hearts. The time has arrived for an expanded level of truth to begin correction.

"We come not for ourselves. No, indeed. Rather, we are in service of Michael. This day marks the beginning of the Correcting Time. Machiventa Melchizedek has arrived and has been duly inaugurated as Acting Planetary Prince of your planet, an assignment he has accepted from Michael.

"Long years we have waited for this day. The Lucifer Rebellion is officially ended in Nebadon. The circuits which have isolated your world are being reopened. All these changes are occurring in accordance with the plan of Michael.

"Gracious listeners, I bid you welcome to change. We mark the beginning of the reign of Prince Machiventa on this day.

"Questions are welcome. Indeed happy am I to serve you."

21

Will's next exercise for the group was to try and visualize each person they met as a child of God, on a path to Paradise, with a fragment of God within them. "Look them in the eye, smile at them, greet them if appropriate, and have kind thoughts toward them.

"Most people walk through life with blinders on. They don't pay much attention to anything or anyone not central to their present goal." Will not only encouraged them to broaden their perspective, but also to live in the present. "See what is happening at that moment. That is where things happen," said Will. "If you don't live in the present, you are wishing for the past or hoping for the future and you miss the magic of the moment. You miss the one-to-one contact between those whose paths you cross. You miss the opportunities that are placed before you. So, live in the present, watch for opportunities, treat all as children of God and have faith that all will work out for the best."



Charles was a black preacher who also washed cars to supplement his income. Vincent had known him for a long time; he was an ex-weightlifter who had trained Vincent for six months several years before. Charles was working off a debt to Vincent by washing his car when he found a Urantia Book in the back seat.

Vincent gave it to him and Charles preached from it thereafter, calling it the “*Urantia Bible*.” This was exciting to Vincent, but even more so today because Charles had recently been hired to preach at a new church in a nearby city and invited Vincent to come and give a ten-minute sermon there. Vincent readily agreed, and that night he told Lucy and began preparing for it. Lucy couldn’t believe it and rolled back her eyes. Now Vincent was to be a preacher—just great!

As the time grew near for the sermon, Vincent decided the topic would be “the laws of man and the laws of God.” The Florida legislature was in session; human laws were subject to change. God’s laws never change. Vincent worked on the sermon for hours and wrote it all out before the service.

At first Lucy and the kids didn’t want to go along, but Vincent protested that they would be missing his first formal preaching engagement and an opportunity for seeing all manner of weirdness. They thought about it and decided he was right—so they loaded up in the car and, with Charles leading the way, were off.

The church was in a predominately black neighborhood, and everyone in the congregation was black except Vincent and his family. Black churches are known by their lengthy services and the enthusiasm of their congregations; they sing a lot and have spontaneous participation. White churches tend to be more subdued and their services are shorter. This particular service went on for three hours and had a very active “amen” corner. In a black church, Vincent found out, you don’t put all your offering into the collection basket the first time it comes around, because it will come around again. All this was quite an experience for the kids—and for Lucy and Vincent, too. Vincent decided he liked black churches better than white ones.

Charles was a master at preaching in this type of church. Vincent noted early on that Charles never delivered more than one sentence at a time as he fished for “amens” from the congregation. By the time Vincent was introduced he had thrown away his prepared text. He strode up to the podium, held his hands and arms up, and said, “Praise the Lord!” The amen corner got on his side and he proceeded to flow the message. He could have gone on and on except that he noticed Lucy giving him a signal

that his ten minutes were up, so he finished and sat down. His first sermon! He was psyched! He loved it! Even Lucy and the kids admitted that it went over better than they had expected. He thought about it for weeks afterward, replaying it in his head:

Praise the Lord! Amen, brother! was the reply of the amen corner.

"Today, in our state, the legislature is meeting. They will change the laws by which we are governed. No man is safe while the legislature is in session. But God's laws never change."

Tell it, brother!

"You can always count on the Lord."

Yes!

"Because God is eternal and so are His laws."

Tell it!

"God is our Father."

Amen!

"He is a loving Father."

Praise Him!

"And all people are His children."

Yes, yes!

"It doesn't matter if they are rich or poor, black or white, old or young, male or female, fat or thin. God is not interested in those differences. He is no respecter of persons."

No, He's not!

"As children of God we are all family."

Amen, brother!

"As we do for the least of His children, we do for Him."

Praise Jesus!

"And God is within each of us."

Hallelujah!

"Don't look for Him here or there, for He is within."

Uh huh!

"What does it take to enter the kingdom? Remember the pact that God made with Abraham? God will do everything. All we have to do is to believe—to have faith."

That's right!

"Let His light shine through you. Practice unselfish service, but above all, have faith."

Yes!

"In your darkest hour, have faith. God loves you."

Praise Him!

"Thank you for having me. Praise the Lord, He loves us all more than we can know."

Amen!



The teachers were impressed by Vincent's sermon. Perhaps he could be good at this. Machiventa thought about it and determined to make those opportunities available for him. He decided to talk to Vincent's guardian seraphim about it.

Machiventa also had a plan for Eric. But, then, he had a plan for every interested party. And, of course, those plans were always changing, depending on the decisions these freewill creatures were making. Predicting what they would do was considerably tougher than the celestials had expected. It is hard to think like a human, especially when you are a celestial.

Very hard.

22

“The love of God surrounds you. The love of God enfolds you. The power of God supports us all. Wherever we gather, He is. Good evening. I am your teacher, Will, who loves you.”

Will had recently taken to telling her group that she loved them. And she *had* grown to love them, despite their many deficiencies. Her little talk with Michael had given her a major attitude adjustment. This Teaching Mission had proven to be as much a learning experience for her as a teaching experience. The universe was one big educational system anyway, but this assignment had driven the point home to her. And Michael’s advice had softened her feelings for the group.

“As you know, I’ve asked you to remember to try different exercises over the last several months. The 1-2-3 exercise, the listening exercise, the living-in-the-present exercise, the seeing-all-people-as-children-of-God exercise. Today I want to give you another exercise, but first I must remind you that these exercises are cumulative—that is, each builds upon the previous one and doesn’t replace it. You should be doing these all at the same time. Here is the next layer. This week, look for opportunities to be of service to those you encounter—giving a smile perhaps, opening a door, letting someone into a crowded traffic lane. Watch for it. Do it. Become actively engaged with searching for ways of providing unselfish service.”



It wasn't long before the groups began trying to provide the service requested. At each meeting they would describe their efforts of the foregoing week. Carol Ann, a working mother in the group, told a moving story one evening:

"I was going into the supermarket when I spotted a crippled man sitting on the floor. He motioned to me and grunted something. Previously I would have averted my eyes, but this time I stopped and bent over to better understand what he was saying. As it turned out, he was requesting that I help him buy his dinner. He had some money and knew what he wanted, but his disability made it difficult for him to purchase the goods without assistance. I refused to take his money and decided instead to buy him a hot meal from the deli rather than the austere meal he had pointed to. I did just that, then set up a tray for him, with napkins and plastic fork and spoon. All the while, people were streaming in and out of the supermarket and, although I would have normally been embarrassed to be seen helping a destitute homeless cripple, this time I was very much at ease. I even saw people I knew and smiled at them. I had lost my fear of helping someone who is considered repulsive by most of society. And when I was done I felt wonderful! I had truly provided a service for a needy person."

The group was appreciative of Carol Ann's story and were all encouraged to go out and do likewise. Then, during the time when they normally received lessons from Will, an unusual thing happened. The story about the man in the supermarket had moved Michael, so, instead of Will, Michael sent a message—the first the group had received from its universe sovereign:

"Greetings to you, one and all, my sons and daughters gathered here in loving respect. I am Michael. I look upon your deeds and I say to you that whenever you approach the least of your brethren with loving respect, then you have done so to me. You have performed a deed that is measured in heaven. Seek not the approval of the rich and the powerful. Seek, instead, to minister to those damaged in spirit and mind as well as body. Your duty is greater to bring those sheep into the fold. My concern flows to them. Those with greater resources are more capable of looking after their own concerns. If you would serve me, serve your broth-

ers and sisters. You need no instruction in identifying those who need the help.

“The Father’s way is the way of love. You will not be covered in glory except among the angels. Your names are known to us. We invite you to join us. We realize the restrictions on your time. Soon enough I will walk among you. I well know your experience. I say in clear conscience that I have lived the full range—was born among you and departed. I thank you and I thank your fathers for the wealth of experience I have gained. If you would be counted among my ministers, I ask you not to concern yourself with those of station in your society. Seek rather the halt, the lame and the damaged—those homeless ones with only their garments to stand between them and the winter winds and the heat of summer.

“The Father’s way is the way of love. My love is freely given to you. Turn about then and share it with your brothers and sisters. The best way to earn love is to give away all the love you have received. When you look again, you will have received another measure. Go forth then in confidence and love. Soon we will meet. Between then and now nothing stands in your way. Take my commission, walk forward into the light. I will be waiting there to receive you. The Father has willed it so. In the Father’s name, so be it.”



The group was surprised at his magnificent yet simple message. Will was also excited. And the service exercise got a big boost. Everyone looked for opportunities for service. As a group they cooked meals and served them to homeless people. Individually each looked to be of service to those whose paths they crossed. And they were happier when they found the opportunity to provide service.

Michael’s message thrilled the group, but it also underlined another interesting aspect of the Teaching Mission: the promise of Michael’s return. Ever since Jesus left this world, people had been expecting his imminent return. Now, again, came the promise of the return of the Creator of the universe, to again walk this Earth. Only this time it was different. No time was given, only the prom-

ise that his return was to be a component of the upliftment of the planet. No, he was not returning to separate the worthy from the unworthy, but rather to provide the light to all, so that all could know the truth. No one in the Teaching Mission considered selling their homes and assets and waiting for the rapture. No one was afraid to see him again. A few in the Teaching Mission wondered what they would do if he came to them and said "Follow me." They wondered what that would mean.

Still, they were excited that they might be around when the event occurred.

23

Word of the Teaching Mission was leaking out and more and more people were being drawn to it. It was rumored that several hundred groups of Urantia Book readers were now under celestial instruction. These developments concerned the primary organization of Urantia Book readers. Its leaders already had their hands full having to deal with overzealous promoters of the book and with people who were scanning the text into computers and giving copies away. Now, a significant number of people were beginning to believe that the celestials had returned to teach people directly. A campaign to discredit the Teaching Mission soon began, and the detractors had reasonable grounds for doubt: the predictions that hadn't materialized, the unorthodox method of communication, the apparent adulterations of the teacher messages.

The teachers recognized that the method of communication was viewed suspiciously by a large percentage of the population and that transmitter/receivers could not be one-hundred-percent accurate in their discernment of the message. Still, the truth was there, and those who took the time to look could find it. They were confident that the truth would crowd out the errors. And the use of the Spirit of Truth—a gift from Jesus to everyone—was necessary not only for identifying truth in the transcripts, but also for finding truth in all facets of life and in all texts. Truth was abundantly available. It was just more or less tainted with error in

varying degrees. So everyone was called upon to recognize the truth in every aspect of their lives. It was no different in the Teaching Mission. No one believed that everything said was gospel. It was the substance of the messages, repeated over and over, that was the basis of the lessons.

But the critics abounded.

Initially, some of the proponents of the Teaching Mission reacted angrily at the attacks on the teachers by people who hadn't bothered to investigate it for themselves. But that in itself became a lesson. It was recognized that an angry argument isn't persuasive, nor does it evidence the loving lessons the teachers were giving. The teachers encouraged members of the Teaching Mission to react lovingly and nonjudgmentally, saying that everyone had the right to decide for themselves. They reminded all who would listen that each person on the planet was a child of God and that each had his or her own path to walk to the Father. If the Teaching Mission wasn't for someone, that was okay. It wasn't designed to be the exclusive method of enlightenment. The Father works through people in many different ways.

And this type of response did more to further the Teaching Mission than the angry denunciations by the organization of Urantia Book readers or the other critics.



Soon an electronic bulletin board sprang up devoted to discussions of the Urantia Book and the Teaching Mission. Available worldwide, it provided another vehicle for getting out the word regarding the Correcting Time.

People also noticed interesting changes taking place around the world. A "Conspiracy of Kindness" campaign began. Churches began joining together for the greater good, vowing not to speak poorly of other denominations. Reports of and interest in angels were widespread. Books on spiritual topics were on the bestseller lists. Although the nightly news was still filled with violence and war, when people looked around their personal circles, they could

see loving attitudes and closer-knit families. The spiritual pressure was discernible.

Vincent likened it to seat belts and smoking. There was a time when no one used seat belts in cars and the majority smoked cigarettes. But over the last twenty years attitudes had changed. Seatbelts were now understood to be beneficial and most people used them. Smoking was recognized to be harmful and, in the United States at least, it had become politically incorrect to smoke. Smoking or failing to buckle a seat belt was no longer cool. It is this same attitude, thought Vincent, that will be fostered by the Correcting Time. The world can only change once a critical mass recognizes the benefits of the lessons. That was Vincent's belief. That, he told people he met, is how the world can be changed.

One person at a time.



Machiventa called the teachers to order. Although he wasn't assigned to watch over this planet, he was the leader, having gained valuable experience when he incarnated on earth four thousand years ago. Because he and his student, Abraham, had fostered the Salem schools, he felt eminently qualified for the role as headmaster to the teachers.

"Greetings! I want to report that things are progressing more quickly than we had anticipated, and more mortals can hear the truth in our messages. Today I want to emphasize again the Father within. I want each of you to embark upon a series of lectures reminding your students of the wonderful gift the Father has bestowed upon each mortal on this planet—namely, a fragment of Himself, resident within each of them. This Father fragment is the constant companion to all humans and always urges them to take the highest path. Indeed, our role is insignificant compared to the God within each human. Although some people recognize this truth, it is not sufficiently emphasized in this world as a whole.

"Our mission, in large part, is to put each of our students in touch with God within them, for therein lies the eternal compass.

We are but a temporary bridge to facilitate contact with the inner guide. So, since we pride ourselves on the practical aspects of spiritual seeking, how will we teach our students to find the Father within?

“By teaching stillness.

“Yes, we teach the daily stillness practice as a method toward greater spiritual contact with God. Humans are, by nature, an indolent lot, more intent on watching television and wasting time than on doing serious inner seeking. So we will begin with a modest proposal—ten minutes per day of stillness practice. This will be difficult for them. Don’t laugh. You will see that I am correct. Ten minutes will be difficult, not only because they will forget, but also because in this region of the planet meditation is not a common practice. In the United States people love convenience, speed and clamor. This stillness practice will ask of them the very things they like least—quiet and patience—so don’t be discouraged if they resist.

“Knowing that the humans will resist this essential practice, how will we overcome the obstacles? Let me make several suggestions. First, let’s remind them of techniques we have seen to be effective in others. For instance, teach them to find a posture that does not create stress to the body, so it won’t be a source of distraction for the mind. Having said this, let me remind you that there are no exclusive ways to find the stillness. Some people like to sit with their backs straight, others like to lie flat on the ground. Still others like to focus on their breathing, while some like to visualize a pastoral scene. Whatever works is okay. And, as we all know, just doing it—just sitting and trying—is enough to reap the benefits of the stillness.

“I would also recommend that you point out these benefits. The calmness that overtakes the practitioner, the reduction of stress, the loss of fear of the unknown, the building of faith, the feeling of well-being, the tug of the heavens, the spiritual connection. The stillness practice gives all this and so much more that is not humanly discernable. It truly builds the spirit and emboldens the person. Because people like to receive compensation for their work, you may want to provide them with a partial list of the benefits that will be conferred. But don’t raise expectations of im-

mediate benefit. These benefits accrue gradually, incrementally and are usually only recognizable over time, upon reflection.

“Let’s all work on this program. I look forward to hearing reports of the effectiveness of your method of teaching the stillness practice.

“Until tomorrow, go with God and continue to be workers in the light.”

24

More and more groups across the country and even the world were suddenly open to, and being taught by, celestial teachers. As word of these groups came trickling in to the Florida group, it became evident to them that this mission was, indeed, global in scope—as it would have to be to fulfill its stated goal of changing the world. Amazingly, none of the people in these groups knew those in the other groups, yet the message was the same. This in itself was a faith promoter, encouraging the members of the Florida group to continue on the path down which Will had directed them.

From Cincinnati came the following: “Greetings to all of you. My name is Tarkas. I am a part of this Teaching Mission that has been commissioned by Michael and the Father Himself to bring spiritual peace, spiritual solace to your troubled planet. If you could see all of the beings and all of the help that is coming to your world and to all the worlds that were a part of the rebellion, you would be astonished by how immense, how much of an effort is being brought to your planet to help heal its problems.

“I understand that this may seem somewhat strange to most of you. I ask only that you listen and that you ask within your own heart and mind for your own divine guidance. If you believe that what you hear is true, then I encourage you to continuing coming to the sessions. If you believe it is *not* true, in the long run, in the

eternal sense, it makes no difference. The Father's love for you is just as great no matter what you decide. I simply ask that you keep an open mind and that you listen for our Father's guidance.

"We are here to provide some help for you. We are your teachers, trying to help you in your spiritual growth. The more you grow spiritually, the more you are able to allow our Father's love to flow through you so that others may see His love within you, and the sooner the benign virus of love can spread to all of this planet.

"I would suggest that this is an opportunity to grow, and an opportunity to serve your brothers and sisters as you grow. In the universe, whatever you learn, you must in turn teach to others. We are here to help the spiritual growth on this planet, but we may not interfere with your human will. We can help you, we can guide you, we can teach you techniques and methods that will bring you closer to the Father, but we cannot do it for you. *You* must do it. *You* must make the choices.

"In all that you do, I wish to assure you that, despite the difficulties and the problems on your world, our Father and this entire universe of universes is truly dominated by love. You cannot imagine, and we have no words to describe to you, the love and the beauty that awaits you. I wish to thank you for coming this evening. We hope we can help to bring you, in this lifetime, closer to our Father's love, to help you feel His love more deeply in your life."

From Maryland: "Good afternoon. I am your teacher and guide. I am very happy to be here. I can feel the excitement in the room. I can tell that you are seekers of truth and I wish to help you on your path to the Father. This path is very exciting and very rewarding, but it takes time, and growth can be painful; however, you will be rewarded for your diligence. The goal, of course, is to align yourselves with the Father, to have His will be your will, to follow Him. The joy that you get from this is immeasurable. The love that you get from the Father you learn to turn around and give to others."

From Idaho: "You have shown the desire for growth. The desire of your heart is known by our Father. It is Him you must turn to or seek daily, Him you must wholeheartedly desire to know.

As your understanding grows, so do your soul and character, even more than your understanding. Seek first our Father's will in all things and His will will be made known to you. Seek and you shall find, love and you shall be loved.

"That is the message for all life, for everyone, to love everyone. And it will never be the easy path, which is to turn your face and not love. The hard path, the path the Father asks you to take, is to look at each individual as having merit, as being indwelt by a fragment of Himself, and therefore lovable."

From Hawaii: "Peace be with you and with your fellows. The light surrounds you and ever draws you closer. The day is near when the planet will surrender unto the glory of our Father. Our associates are thrilled at the opportunity to serve the Father and Michael in these capacities. Keep the faith and new avenues of service will be open to you. Never doubt the overwhelming power of His love which spreads through you and reaches out into the unknown realms of human need. This is the way for all to realize the plan, by sharing His messages of joy, goodwill and friendship. As you receive, reach out to extend the Father's loving light to shine out in all its glory to those who hunger for its warmth and healing rays. I say to you, nothing is impossible in the service paths of the almighty, all-knowing Father of all bounteous and never-ending joyful service."

From central Florida: "The love and light of the Father surrounds us and shines as bright as a star in our hearts. If you want that star to shine brighter in your life, you must strive to allow our Father to live your life with you. This can be done on a continuous basis if only you will it to be so in your life. You alone control your destiny; you alone will make the decision to do the Father's will."

From Southern California: "It is truly a wonderful event when mortals gather to hear these teachings. Be of good cheer, lighten your load and let us bring together the spiritual awakening of our planet. It is a pleasure to be in your company, to be with you, children of time, to teach you of things both great and small, to converse with you, to try to answer your questions."

From Washington State: "Children of the dawning light. You have been called to the forefront of a movement which is sweeping the nations into a circle bounded by love and energized by the light.

And, finally, from another California group: "Children of time, this is Machiventa. I wish to welcome you to the ever-growing Teaching Mission that has been established on this planet to lift mankind out of darkness and into the light of living Truth. I have come with many teachers to assist you on your path through life and your ascension career. This is a mission that has been ordained by our Creator Son, Michael. Special care is being rendered to this planet to help those who are willing to be brought into Light and Life. You are each beloved children of our heavenly Father.

"From this moment on, as you progress through life, much will change, not only for yourselves but for those you contact in your daily lives and for the planet in general. We are about a great business here. It is much different than when I walked as a man on your planet almost four thousand years ago. The light of truth had almost gone out, but now it shines brightly. We are desirous of enlisting your help in spreading this light abroad across the land. As more and more men and women find this light in their hearts, the whole of society will change. It will move in uncharted directions, but do not be afraid. The new directions are carefully guided and lovingly administered every step of the way.

"For you here today—those of you who find this experience new and exciting—we welcome you, we encourage you, and we pray for you, for much of this work is on your shoulders. But it is a joyous service, the most joyous service of all the service that mankind can render to mankind. Look forward to the days ahead.

"Look forward to your life in this light."

25

Vincent tried to keep in contact with as many groups as he could. He liked to hear what they were up to and also to support their efforts. Will's group kept a map on the wall with pins in each location of a known Teaching Mission group, and more pins were being added each week.

He liked the fact that the Teaching Mission had no official organization, no dues, no oath, none of the traditional organizational structures that led to fossilization and dogma. People could come and go at will. The only requirement for membership was interest—those who were interested in attending the weekly meetings and shining forth the Father's love did so; those who weren't interested, didn't.



Vincent sent another message to the Internet bulletin board to report an unexpected experience.

"Hello again, friends.

"My car was giving me trouble and, although I usually avoid dealership service shops, I decided to give them another chance because they had a shuttle service to take me to work. Well, I was in for quite a surprise when I got in with everyone else whose cars were being serviced that day. The driver was a jovial old black man who made no bones about his faith. He told us how happy he was that God had granted him another day, and declared that he would

make the most of it. The passengers looked uncomfortable, concerned that they were about to get preached to. He then pointed to all the people on the street and reminded us that ‘they are all on death row. No matter how high or how low, they’re all gonna die, and until they do, they are here to learn to be more like the Father.’

“Some people were squirming, but he went on and recounted a story about some trouble he got into when he didn’t pay his income taxes. IRS agents came into the car dealership where he had worked for thirty-eight years, handcuffed him, and were about to haul him off to jail for \$48 he owed the IRS.

“He told us that even then he wasn’t afraid—he just kept thinking, ‘Ain’t this something?’ Then he laughed, said he never worried, just trusted the Lord. ‘In fact,’ he allowed, ‘I always look at everything that happens to me to be something that God sends to me for my education. It sure makes it easier to have a good attitude about it from that perspective!’ He seemed to revel in his adversities.

“I went in to get my car fixed and was blessed with an encounter with a spirit-led man who was overflowing with good cheer. I knew that he was an inspiration for all the people he delivered to work in his shuttle, and I marveled at how God had arranged for him to have a job that permitted him daily contact with so many different people. He was planting seeds with so much good cheer that he washed away the initial concerns we all had. I reflected on the Correcting Time and laughed when I thought about all the people who exhibit the Father’s love as they pass by, even though they have never heard of the Urantia Book or the Teaching Mission and are just led to do so from within themselves. Indeed, the Father’s indwelling spirit is our most powerful and persistent guide.

“It’s funny how I am running into this type of thing more these days—or am I just noticing it more? Hard to say, but I like it! I hope each of you has a wonderful day.

“Until next time, cheers! Vincent.”



Will took Machiventa’s advice and began a series of lessons on stillness practice.

"When Jesus walked upon this planet, his apostles and disciples and their families went through the same trying experiences you are going through now. We know that you often feel unfit, unprepared, inept and unguided. Yet we say that this is not so, that you are as well and as lovingly prepared as any creature, for the Universal Father has bestowed upon each of you individually and as a group all that is necessary for you to arrive and grow. We have said repeatedly in these meetings that our contribution by comparison is trivial and we believe that is so. Stillness is the method which will bring calm and composure to your daily lives. Stillness will give you courage. It will give you a thick skin, strong heart and a well-organized mind. Stillness will make you fully human—the proper launching pad from which to soar to heaven. Therefore, we are grateful when we see you taking a few moments from your earthly exertions to reestablish communication with the Universal Father. We urge you to look to this mechanism.

"The celestial instructors possess a quality that you would call single-mindedness. They are devoted to their respective tasks. It is the reason they were created. That is how they render service. They are performing what is asked. But the Father's ministry is personal, and each Father fragment is keenly attuned to the indwelt human. We cannot fathom how He does it. Some of His choices are surprising, but we must admit that the program works. It seems to be absolutely successful. There is no other program that has achieved this rate of success.

"So, we say again—for the hundredth time, the thousandth time—regular daily silent communication with the heavenly Father will illuminate your path, the path that is right for you. This life is a whirlwind experience, yet with the Father as the Pole Star and His indwelling spirit as your compass, you may pass through the maelstrom undisturbed. While your Earth brothers and sisters and the celestial ministers crash and bang around you in pursuit of their own individual objectives, you may serenely walk into the Father's light. He is the way.

"These are my words for you tonight. Heed them. Time is slipping away."

26

In March, 1992, the Tallahassee Teaching Mission group was having a sharing time, discussing their adventures in the world during the week and the work they had done to spread goodness and light. It was a rather innocuous exchange, much like those that had taken place in previous weeks. There was no way to anticipate the message that was to be delivered on this night. When they entered into group stillness practice they were surprised to have Will interrupt and announce that several Melchizedeks, including Machiventa, stood ready to address them. Machiventa had spoken to them before, but it was not a common occurrence. Today's message, however, promised to be more extraordinary than any previously given. They all sat up and paid attention.

MANTUTIA MELCHIZEDEK: Michael has this to say: You are not the *elect*, you are the *select*, and he is pleased. Each of you is known to him from the beginning of this effort. Each of you has been thoroughly examined and found ready for this task. You are known to him and you will soon stand in his shadow. Your world is scheduled for a change of more than epochal magnitude. Michael proposes to take human form and walk among the people, to gather them unto him and reveal himself to them in all his glory and in the name of the Father. Michael's light reaches into every corner. There is no place to

avoid his power. You cannot shrink from that which surrounds you. He has but to have the thought, and the event is achieved. Many are his servants. Your world will be blanketed with his shining example. I know whereof I speak, for I am a Melchizedek in his service. My name is Mantutia Melchizedek. I will precede him, together with Malvatia Melchizedek and Machiventa Melchizedek, and it will be our honor to prepare his way. Michael himself will usher in the Magisterial Son to follow, and God's wake will then wash across this universe. It is the tide that raises all boats. Your world will be changed as much as the difference between night and day.

Michael's sun never sets. A new day will dawn for you, our friends and noble companions. You will be called. Make yourselves ready. Clear the decks. The time of action is here and not many days hence. You will see these events transpire with your earthly eyes. Make ready. The table is set. I bid you a fond farewell and look forward to meeting you and embracing you, each one of you. So be it.

MACHIVENTA MELCHIZEDEK: It has been decided that the instruction groups, while a sterling idea, are not the best method for reaching the majority of the people, not only on this continent but around the planet. Therefore, we have turned up the fire. Michael has ordained it so. Several of us have been asked to take on human form. I am happy about it and look forward to it. I do not long for the burden of the material flesh for it is cumbersome in some respects, but there are compensations. There are days when the smell of fresh air makes life worth living. In not many days from now, we shall look upon each other as brothers and sisters in the flesh. I anticipate this. We desire that you enjoy the things of the material life that help you appreciate the great God's creation. I have enjoyed your companionship and fellowship up until now. It has been a joyful experience for all the members of the instruction team.

Mark this lesson, for it should serve you well: Opportunity leads to further opportunity. We are on a grand adventure. I look forward to seeing the planets hanging in the night sky, the sky growing lighter before the dawn, the heat and the bugs and the

dogs. I thought I had put these memories behind me, but now I have another opportunity to relive these experiences and correct whatever mistakes I made, this time with Michael as my companion. What a joy! I will be happy to be rid of the burdens of office. I prefer to be myself, Machiventa Melchizedek, your companion, your guide, your friend. Many are the conversations we will have together. I welcome this.

We all have work to do. The day will arrive. You will know. Everyone will know. What a grand development! I will speak with you again before this event transpires, but I must return to the party. Goodnight and God bless you."



The students in Will's class sat open-mouthed, stunned. Up till now they had come together once a week to listen to the teachers, and then had been able to walk around all week basically unaffected in their "normal" life. Sure, they were attempting to be kinder, more generous and loving, but the lessons were not so intrusive that they felt put off by the exercise. But having a Melchizedek walk around with them was a different matter altogether! They each reflected upon the changes such an appearance would produce.



The announcement of the coming of the Melchizedeks was transcribed and faxed to the other groups and was confirmed by each of their teachers, although the time frame for the appearance varied from the "weeks" stated to the Florida group to more indefinite times predicted by others. But the electricity that the announcement generated could not be denied. At the next meeting, when asked about the timing of the appearance, Machiventa told the group to treat everyone they met as if that person was Machiventa himself. They all speculated upon what type of physical body he would appear in. What race would he be? Would he come as an old man with a flowing beard? How would he explain to the authorities who he was? Would he have identification? Ro-

land suggested he come back as a black female to confront some of the present-day prejudices. Everyone was excited and looked for his return any day.

It wasn't too long before the doubts began.

Indeed, no Melchizedek appeared the next week, the week after that, or the next month. This irritated the group and especially Eric, who had transmitted the message. The members, after all, had not asked for this type of information and prided themselves on their conservatism and rationality—even if they were being taught by celestials! They didn't appreciate predictions of events that didn't materialize. They talked at length about all this several weeks after the prophesized event was to have taken place. Eric cried out in frustration, "Being invisible is no excuse!" much to the amusement of those gathered. They informed the celestials that they wanted no more predictions, and Will agreed. There was no upside in prophecies: If they came true, a flood of curiosity seekers would become interested in the Teaching Mission solely to foresee their futures; if they didn't come true, doubt would be cast on the true teachings of the Teaching Mission, which had nothing to do with forecasting events. From the beginning, the Teaching Mission had emphasized living in the present and having faith that, in time, everything would work out for the best. The foretelling of the Melchizedek materializations had surprised everyone—it just wasn't like the teachers to do that. And yet, even though Will had agreed not to make any more predictions, she continued to maintain to the group that the Melchizedeks would return to walk the Earth during their lifetimes. But the group did not want to contemplate even that.

Before this, the group had been very enthusiastic about the Teaching Mission, but the non-appearance of the Melchizedeks caused them to become somewhat disillusioned. Many began to doubt that what they were involved with was indeed contact with celestials. The group shrank. Vincent, however, had been through disappointments before and was not particularly upset by this turn of events. He reflected on the poor folks who had toiled for years to develop the Garden of Eden without ever knowing if

their efforts were going to be for naught. The thought of their steadfast faith was enough to keep him going. Could it be true that the earth stood on the brink of a major universe event?

Although not saying so publicly, Vincent thought it wholly possible, even probable, that the Melchizedeks were indeed planning to materialize again on this planet. Could this occurrence trigger a series of events that would culminate in the second coming of Christ Michael to this planet?

Vincent thought so.

And he wasn't the only one who entertained such thoughts.

27

When the word got out in the Urantia Book community at large of the failure of the Melchizedeks to appear on schedule, great glee was expressed by those who did not believe in the Teaching Mission. A satire magazine published a cartoon of a Melchizedek school with the caption, "What if they established a school and nobody came?" Many saw this as the beginning of the end for the Teaching Mission. They had expected something to go awry before long and, in their minds, the strangeness had now begun. And they were glad that it had, because prior to this they had been perplexed by the absence in the Teaching Mission of the types of behavior that typically doomed religious cults. For one thing, no single charismatic personality had come along to take over; indeed, just the opposite had occurred. Numerous people reported being able to communicate with the teachers, and none seemed to be egotistical about it. They were primarily concerned about the clarity of their transmissions and vigilant about keeping themselves out of the picture.

Second, no money had ever been requested. In fact, one teacher, when asked about money, said he simply had no need for it. So here was another feature of the Teaching Mission that was at variance with most religious organizations. Plus, the mission was not an organization—at least not in the conventional sense. There appeared to be celestial organization behind the scenes, but no human organization had formed. And the people involved seemed

intent on keeping it that way. The known historical disputes within other religious organizations taught them that grassroots efforts worked best, especially when the goal was to spread the Father's light one-on-one.

And finally, the Teaching Mission offered entry to everyone and taught love to all, regardless of whether they embraced the goals and purposes of the mission or not. It was a tolerant and loving approach. All this was disconcerting to those who were unwilling to accept that such a mission was in progress.

The failed Melchizedek predictions pleased the naysayers.



Vincent observed that those who actively opposed the Teaching Mission were not maliciously attacking the participants. Instead, they were reminding everyone of the common problems associated with these types of communications. He began to understand that much of their questioning was sincere and well-meaning. Realizing their intent, he learned to appreciate their apprehensions and to be thankful for their advice. He felt that his objectivity was intact, and vowed to remain skeptical and questioning with regard to the entire process.



Machiventa called the teachers to order.

"Take your seats. Well, I'm afraid that my overzealousness caused me to violate my own rule against predictions. You can see the results. It was such a pleasant surprise to all of us to learn that Michael would authorize the establishment of Melchizedek universities on the planet so soon into the mission that, in my joy, I prematurely informed our students, as they may one day be teachers in these universities. But this will take more time than I had initially thought, so doubt has again been fueled. But, don't worry. I am sure it will all work out for the best. And we haven't lost many students to this 'failed' prediction; we just aggravated them a bit. They will get over it.

“But let’s not lose sight of our lesson structure. Let’s move on to our next lesson. This week I would like you to focus on the family. As you know, the family is the foundation of our ministry. We speak of God as the Father/Mother—the Parent or First Source and Center—for those whose students are sensitive to gender-based descriptions of God. Indeed, God, while generally described as male by this culture, is not male or female, but both. We use the term ‘Father’ because that is the concept with which most people can identify, but don’t let that become a barrier to those you teach.

“People are all children of God. And often people can best obtain a glimpse of the love of God when they themselves have children and feel that love that they have for their offspring. By using this analogy of God as the parent and people as the children, they can better understand the type of watchcare that God provides them. He permits them free will and allows them to suffer the consequences of their actions, but he always listens to their petitions and never fails to answer them. Many people do not believe this because the answer is seldom what they expect nor does it arrive in the time frame or the form which they anticipate. Yet, God responds much like a human parent who refuses to grant a child a foolish or dangerous request and instead provides a different and more appropriate substitute. God is the most caring and compassionate parent imaginable, and the seeking of God’s will in each life is the work of a lifetime on this material world and the pursuit of an eternity on the spiritual plane.

“This week focus on humanity as the family of God.”

Vincent had agreed to become president of the Little League baseball park where his son, Riley, played. Nobody wanted the job because of the volatile nature of the parents. The ten-to-twelve-year-olds were still young enough for their parents to believe their child would play in the major leagues one day. Accordingly, the parents took great offense if their children were not playing enough, or not playing in what the parent decided was the appropriate position. The league president had to settle these complaints. Then there were the “win at all cost” coaches who constantly had to be reined in. Being president was not easy. Vincent had initially refused the position, but in the end he thought there might be value in taking it on.

The goings-on with the league became the subject of many of his posts to the electronic bulletin board.

“Hello, everyone!

“Well, it has turned into a beautiful day after a somewhat dreary and rainy weekend. I am happy to announce that the Little League tryouts and draft have ended and we are beginning practice for the upcoming season. Now what might appear to be a baseball league will become, I hope, a school for sportsmanship and cooperation.

“It did my heart good to have a remarkable eleven-year-old girl named Billie Ann register to play in the league. Not only do I think team sports should include more women, I also believe it is

good to have the boys participating with the girls so that some semblance of respect can develop.

"And develop it did on a blustery Saturday morning as Billie Ann waited in the outfield for the coaches to hit her a fly ball. The coach put a little too much pop on the ball and it was obviously going over her head. She took one look at it, turned her back, and sprinted to the wall where she made an over-the-shoulder catch that Willie Mays would have been proud of. She then spun around and threw a strike at the plate. The crowd erupted and gave her a standing ovation. She was selected in the first round of the draft and she will be an impact player. I can't wait to see what develops. I'll keep you apprised as the season progresses.

"Until then, see you around in cyberspace!"



Despite the failed predictions, the numbers of those interested in communicating with the celestial realms continued to grow. More and more cities had groups forming and teachers arriving. Vincent tried to keep up with the known groups, obtaining as many transcripts from them as he could. He posted excerpts of the teacher lessons for people to read and consider. He liked to post not only the message, but also the date of the lesson, the city in which the transmission was received and the name of the teacher. Providing that type of information, he felt, would demonstrate the consistency of the messages and the diversity of the sources, and show the readers that something unusual was indeed taking place. He drew quite a lot of flak for this, but he didn't mind. In fact, he thrived on it. He had the perfect personality for this type of activity. Unlike many long-time Urantia Book readers who had known each other for years, Vincent was not personally acquainted with those who attacked him, so he didn't take offense. He used it as an opportunity to respond kindly and was heartened by the results.

Vincent received inquiries about the Teaching Mission from around the world. Early on, after the Florida group had permitted the dissemination of Will's teachings, Vincent had mailed out computer disks all over the United States, providing many groups

with their first glimpse of what was going on. Will became a much-loved teacher throughout the land. But even Vincent was surprised when he received a letter from Chile, from a young university student who had somehow received a copy of the Will lessons and wanted to know more about the phenomenon. Vincent had his response translated into Spanish and sent it along with three Spanish-translation Urantia Books to be distributed among the student's group of seekers. Soon Vincent was communicating with Chileans who emailed him pictures and descriptions of their country. Others joined the Internet discussions, including people from Brazil, Taiwan, Russia, Finland and Australia. The Internet was being used to plant seeds all over the world. It was rumored that groups were forming all over the planet.

This was mind-boggling to Vincent and the others who remembered a time when there was only one known group in the whole world.



"Fear rules this planet." Machiventa was again lecturing the teachers. "And fear is the spirit poison that is most in need of eradication. When people fear the present, the future and the results of their decisions, they are less able to connect with the divine spark within. They throw up barriers to the spiritual paths they seek. Indeed, what can possibly happen on this world that a person should be fearful of? From an eternal perspective, little, but from a material perspective, much. And much of this has to do with the unequal distribution of wealth on this world.

"Many suffer in poverty while others live lives of luxury. This imbalance leads to crime, violence and war. Many people are afraid of going hungry or losing their homes. Medical treatment is limited to those who can afford to pay. Yes, there is ample adversity to make even the strongest afraid, yet we must instruct our students that adversity involves opportunity, and that the universe is friendly to them despite appearances to the contrary.

"There is no reason to fear if you have faith in the overcare of God. All will work out for the best in the end. This lesson will be difficult to impart. Some will see it as appealing only to the hope-

lessly naive, yet it is true. Practicing a life of fearlessness will render benefits that are actual and discernable. And, in truth, where is the security in life on this planet? There is none, in any event.

"Ask your students to look around and see how even the highest among them are, at times, brought low. The richest among them are oftentimes the least happy, and no amount of power or riches can thwart death. Therefore, fear is not warranted. Fear is to be shaken. Worry is not productive. Remind your students that most of what they worry about and dread happening will never come to pass. This is no time to worry, only to forge ahead with the work of the Father. Spread His light to all you meet. That is our message.

"The mortals you instruct today should know that they are not being taught these truths merely for their own self-improvement, although that is the first step. They need to realize that along with knowledge comes a responsibility to pass that knowledge along. As they learn, so shall they teach. That is the way of the universe and they are all universe citizens, as are all the people on this planet.

"Most are not aware of this citizenship, but they soon will be as our Teaching Mission grows and flowers. Our students will be teachers. They need to practice lending a hand to those whose knowledge is less advanced. It is a service they will be called on to provide. They will enjoy it. The opportunities for people on this planet are staggering. Many personalities in the celestial realms would love to have the prospects for service that each human has every day on this planet. Such possibilities are the result of the Lucifer rebellion and the darkness that has enveloped this planet since the circuits were disconnected. With the reestablishment of the circuits and the arrival of legions of celestials as helpers, this planet will be accelerated into the ages of Light and Life.

"Class dismissed!"

29

Earth is an interesting planet for the celestial teachers. To begin with, it is a decimal planet; that is, a planet in which certain experimental forms of life were created to see how they would interact with other, more standard types of plant and animal life. The celestial designers designate every tenth planet a decimal planet and seed it with trial strains of animals and plants.

Secondly, not only did Earth participate in the system-wide Lucifer rebellion, it also suffered the default of their Adam and Eve. Immortal superhuman “missionaries” from the universe headquarters, Adam and Eve had been dispatched to Earth to biologically upstep the indigenous races and to teach them the rudiments of civilization, according to the standard plan for each evolving planet. They lived and worked in an exquisite and very real place known as the Garden of Eden, a peninsula now underwater off the coast of present-day Cyprus. For almost a hundred years Adam and Eve sired children, who intermarried and had children of their own. This new race, known as the Adamites, were instructed not to mate with Earth’s natives until their own numbers had grown sufficiently. The Adamites fostered trade and industry, and worked to educate and bring about understanding among the mostly backward and hostile tribes surrounding them who were suffering the disastrous effects of the Lucifer rebellion.

But change was slow. With so little progress after a hundred years, Adam and Eve grew impatient. It became apparent to Eve

that the upstepping program would need to be accelerated if any advances were to be made. And so, with the best of intentions, she agreed to mate with a native man in order to prematurely produce a genetically superior leader for the world. When Adam learned that Eve had broken their covenant, he decided to share in her fate by purposely breeding with a native woman. Through this joint default, which rendered Adam and Eve mortal, the Adamic mission was cut short. Earth's inhabitants were left deprived of much of their planned upstepping. This loss, added to the universe quarantine, was largely responsible for the Earth's blighted condition.

Even so, Earth was chosen to be the site of Michael's bestowal in human form. Imagine, the Creator of a universe incarnated as a mortal on a world of time—not just any world, but the most backward planet in the universe! It is here that Michael, as Jesus, demonstrated how to live the perfect mortal life and how to reveal the God within each of us to all of our brothers and sisters. And his example is revered throughout our local universe and taught to the youth of every planet in Michael's creation.

But even that event was turned into a divisive barrier to the spread of love and kindness on this world. Bloody wars were fought over the belief systems that grew out of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Such events were not easy for the celestials to understand, yet they had happened and were continuing to happen. Yes, the celestials had a formidable task before them on this strife-torn world, but they confidently affirmed:

“We shall not fail!”



Roland was recovering from the holidays when, toward the end of January, he received a message from his personal teacher, Amster, telling him to gather some of his group's transcripts and travel to a fitness spa in St. George, Utah. At first he protested, but was then informed that his presence was necessary for a service project.

Roland had previously been told that he was being prepared as a teacher—maybe even an ambassador for Michael—and he

understood that to mean he should be available to go wherever he was needed on a moment's notice. He reflected on the promise he had made to be of service and cheerfully began to gather his clothes and other necessities for the trip. As he climbed into his Volvo, he heard Amster again, this time telling him that he needed *two* sets of transcripts.

"Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?" protested Roland. But he dutifully went back inside for another set of lesson transcripts. Those in hand, he returned to the car, backed it out of the garage, and took off on another adventure.



Vincent was again taking time to communicate with his cyberfriends on the Internet. He had gotten to know some of them and he liked to tell them what was going on in his life, if for no other reason than to assure them that an interest in the Teaching Mission did not mean he had now become a recluse.

"Greetings!

"Baseball is in the air around here and the weather feels a lot like spring. This weekend we had a work day to clean up the Little League ballpark and to paint the concession stand and the dugouts. We had a wonderful turnout of parents and coaches. Little League is one of those times where children and their parents are brought together for a common activity. It provides an excellent opportunity for parents to set an example for the children, and I am confident that most of the parents will avail themselves of this opportunity.

"I also was thinking, while I was painting the rafters in the concession stand, about seeking the spirit in every event in our lives. Although the painting work was somewhat tedious, I was truly enjoying it and the fellowship of others who were donating their time to make our park a better place. I was thinking that this is what Light and Life must be like—everyone pitching in to provide a benefit to others. It was great experience, and the park looks good to boot—a real win-win weekend.

"I think that this job will be better than I had originally thought. One of the parents of a new child to the park comment-

ed to me that he had never experienced so much parental involvement in preparing a field for a season. This made me smile inside. 'You ain't seen nothin' yet,' I thought.

"Lighten Life, Vincent"

30

Will again addressed her students. Their number had grown, It surprised some that Jill and David were no longer interested in the Teaching Mission after having been instrumental in bringing it into their group. Will didn't seem to mind and continued to forge ahead with her lessons.

"The Teaching Mission is about incorporating the lessons of the Urantia Book into your daily lives. Few people have done this, but it is imperative to the advancement of your own knowledge. Experience is the best form of schooling and I intend for you to go into the streets to practice on those you encounter. That is why this group has, from the beginning, been given lessons to try out during the week. That is also why we spend so much time discussing the results of your efforts.

"This week I would like you to try to flow love to each person you meet—the #2 of the 1-2-3 exercise. But in doing so, I want you to visualize that person as a spiritual entity, not just a mortal human. That's right, you are all of a dual nature—one part mortal and one part potentially immortal—divine. The difference between the mortal being and the spiritual being is often unseen by humans, even those who believe in angels and other invisible personalities. Think of this—visualize the finest machine that man has ever made, with all its positive attributes and all its deficiencies. Then visualize the smallest of God's creations, with all its intricacies, and then you will be able to under-

stand the differences between the works of humans and God's works, between the mortal being and the spiritual being.

"So this week you will look at the spiritual side of those you meet. Look for the best in them. Understand that they each have a fragment of God within them. Take heed of the custom, in some of your cultures, of bowing to one another upon meeting, to greet the spirit within the other. This is the type of consciousness you should attempt to develop, for when you regard each individual as an evolving child of God, you will be more likely to treat them with kindness."



Roland checked into the spa and began its one-week program of diet, exercise, meditation and rest. While he sought to discuss spiritual matters with everyone he came in contact with, he was especially interested in talking with one of his group leaders, a woman he felt drawn to. Each day she would take Roland's group out for a brisk power walk in the countryside and each day he would attempt to strike up a meaningful conversation with her, but to no avail.

After several days he ran into another woman, one who was clearly in need of help, as she had been devastated by a broken relationship and was questioning the existence of God. Roland spoke kindly to her and presented her with a set of the transcripts he had brought along. He also recommended that she read the Urantia Book.

He continued to look for the person for whom the other set of transcripts was intended.

31

Lately Vincent had begun to wonder where all this would lead. It had been over two years since Will first arrived, and the group had met diligently each week to talk and to listen to Will's lessons. More people were able to hear the teachers now and more continued to try, including Vincent. The teachers had informed the group that each of them had a personal teacher, that a teacher was available for every human who wanted to be taught. All they had to do was pray for a teacher and listen in the stillness, and with practice they would become proficient in hearing them.

But how was all this helping to bring light to this planet? Riots, wars, hatred and intolerance still abounded. True, Communism had collapsed, but the aftermath—warfare between cultural groups—didn't seem to be much of an improvement. How, in the face of all this, could small acts of kindness actually have an effect? The teachers assured the students that, much like the ripple effect of one drop of water onto the surface of a lake, these actions could and would make a difference. And really, how else could it be done? Certainly no government program would be able to make it happen. Governments, thought Vincent, were the worst offenders in the fight against incivility. He could understand how this conspiracy of kindness could grow exponentially, but he still had to keep reminding himself that it was possible.

It seemed so unlikely.



Will continued with her lessons about the stillness, a key element of the courses offered by the Teaching Mission.

"It's not always comfortable being alone with God. The experience is usually full of intrusive thoughts. You wonder where to put your feet, how you should hold your mouth, if you should think some certain thing or *not* think some certain thing. It is difficult to instruct people in what they should do. We have had almost two years of discovery. I think it is a good start, although I will tell you frankly that regularity is more important than success.

"The stillness practice, in one way, is like going into the quiet place in yourself. Many people find this place to be theoretical. They agree that it must be somewhere, but all the doors look the same. For most people, successful stillness practice means marking the door. Once you move away from the door you are subject to all of the other factors of life—the times you are excited, the times you are relaxed, the times the pressures of daily life catch up with you, the times they are discharged, the times you worry about the things that have yet to pass and those that have gone before. When you find the door with the mark on it, straighten your back and open it. But when you do open it, you see nothing. This is frustrating to most people.

"I think the experience is best likened to standing on the bow of a large ship, so far above the water and projected so far forward that even the ship's prow cutting through the waves makes no sound to you. You look out into the fog, all your senses keen, and there is simply no information—no thoughts, no vision, no smells, no sounds, no feelings. And yet, you are surrounded with concern and love and guidance.

"It is time to get serious about stillness practice. Next week we will begin discussions. This week try to put a mark on the door that will last so that you can come and go as you please."



Vincent had a business meeting in a distant city the next

morning, so he booked himself on an evening flight for the day before. When he arrived at the airport, late as usual, he discovered that the flight had been overbooked and his seat given to another person. In the past, he would have angrily demanded his seat be returned to him, but now he merely shrugged, rebooked for an early morning flight, and went home. He had since learned to view these events positively as they often opened the way for something interesting to happen. He kept his eyes open.

On the plane the next morning he found himself sitting next to a woman in blue jeans. This was unusual for early morning flights, as they were generally filled with business people in suits. Vincent turned to her and said, "What gets you up for this red-eye flight?"

The woman replied that she was on her way to a conference on breast cancer, but Vincent misunderstood her and thought she said that she was going to be *treated* for breast cancer. Embarrassed, he quickly changed the subject. He recounted the story of missing his evening plane the day before, adding that it hadn't upset him because he had a new attitude on life. When she inquired further, it gave him an opening to speak to her about spiritual matters.

He told her that he now believed the world could be changed by small acts of kindness and from love being spread from one person to another, but that it had to be done directly, not through giving money. As he spoke, her face reddened. She grew very silent and gradually turned her head towards the window, where she fixed her gaze on the clouds outside.

"Now what have I done?" wondered Vincent. Puzzled, he decided that he had talked to her enough. He leaned back and closed his eyes for the remainder of the trip.

When they got off the plane, she said nothing to him.

32

On January 31, 1993, at the spa where he was still searching for the second person he had been sent to assist, Roland decided to go along on the scheduled daily walk in the country. He was disappointed that the woman who usually led them was absent, and when he inquired about her he was told that she had the day off.

About halfway into the walk, it began to snow—not just fine snow but big, fluffy flakes. The hike leader suggested they turn around and go back, and it was a good thing that she did, because the snow began falling harder and they were ill-equipped to deal with it. It was highly unusual for this part of the country to get snow, even in January.

Back at the spa, Roland and the other men were having lunch together for the last time. It was their final day and they were all preparing to leave. Roland still had not located the second person and he began to wonder if perhaps he had been wrong about needing to bring two sets of transcripts. Gazing out the window of the lunchroom, he casually mentioned to one of the men that he wished he was sitting in front of a roaring fire watching the snow come down, with a good bottle of wine and a beautiful woman by his side. The man chuckled and said, “Yeah, and I wish I could win the lottery!” They both laughed.



Returning home from his meeting, Vincent was checking in at the airport when he encountered the same woman he had met on the plane that morning. This time she waved at him and asked him to sit next to her. She apologized for her behavior on the morning flight and explained that she had turned away from him because, after hearing his message to her, she was afraid she would start crying. "Lately, I have been very depressed. My husband has left me, I have a small child to support, I loathe my job, and I particularly hate my boss. I have been taking a walk each night with a friend of mine, a very spiritual woman who has been encouraging me to pray for help, which I have been doing for several months but to no avail. My friend counseled me to continue and assured me that prayers are answered in unexpected ways. Meanwhile, I have been looking for a new job, without success, and I continue to hate my boss."

"That sounds bad," Vincent responded sympathetically, wondering where this was going.

"When you said what you did to me, it hit me right between the eyes! You probably don't understand this, but when you spoke of small acts of loving kindness I realized that I haven't learned that lesson. I see that I need to express love to my boss as well as develop a better attitude in my work. By doing those things, I'm sure I will improve my situation and even find the better job I've been looking and praying for. My friend is right: You don't know how God will answer your prayers. But God apparently chose you to deliver the message to me, and I thank you."

Vincent sat stunned. He had been wondering how effective his attempts to spread the message were, and suddenly he misses a plane and sits next to a woman who needs to hear that very message! Although he never saw her again, he was just as buoyed by the experience as she was. He began to understand that the lives of strangers he met in passing might be positively affected by the mission, though he might never know it.

He also chuckled at the manipulations of the angels who somehow got him on the right plane and the right seat, and then even managed to have the woman be on the same flight home so he too could reap the benefits of the encounter. If they hadn't met again only she would have benefited, but now they both had.

He was sure that the celestials were behind this and that they were happy with their success.



As the teachers indicated, this Teaching Mission was not only for Urantia Book readers but for everyone. That only made sense, thought Vincent, as there were so few readers of the Urantia Book. Vincent had seen little evidence of the celestials working with other groups until one day when he was getting a quote on a repair job for the roof of his beach house. The repairman, Wild Bill, was discussing how much work was needed over a cup of coffee. Responding to an off-the-cuff question about whether anything interesting was happening in his life, Wild Bill told a story which surprised even Lucy.

Wild Bill had a friend whose wife had been awakened in the middle of the night and “spoken to” by “God.” Vincent’s ears perked up when he heard that, and he asked for more details. God had apparently encouraged her to provide service to the homeless in their community. She and her husband decided to act on God’s words and, through many synchronicities, were led to a rundown, two-story, one-time restaurant and fishing lodge, built in 1929 with heart-of-pine wood and set on seventeen acres of land. The couple decided it would be perfect to renovate for use as a temporary shelter, so they sold all they had and used the money to purchase the old lodge. After they began the resoration, Wild Bill liked the idea so much that he and his family sold their home as well and moved into the ramshackle quarters to assist in the project.

This story intrigued Vincent, and the next day he drove through the pouring rain for fifteen miles to get to the facility. There he found the hard-working group busily scraping paint. Wild Bill introduced Vincent to Mary Linda, the woman responsible, and she confirmed that she had indeed heard the voice of God, adding that she continued to hear from Him from time to time.

Vincent wondered what was going on and later asked Will about it. Will confirmed that the celestials were indeed working

with Mary Linda, and that she was providing a valuable service to her community. This Vincent could not deny. In fact, he became so interested in the project that he began stopping by on his way to the beach to help out. One day he even brought some visiting members of his group down to the shelter to help plaster the dining room ceiling. By that time, the shelter had been named “Covenant House” and some homeless people were already being received and cared for. It was a remarkable demonstration of faith. These people had sold everything to embark on a renovation without knowing where their next dollar would come from, yet they persevered and found that when they needed something, it usually appeared—but in an unexpected way.

Of course.

33

“Michael would like to send you his thanks for the wonderful birthday present you provided him.”

The Tallahassee group had recently celebrated Michael’s birthday which, according to the Urantia Book, occurred at noon, August 21, 7 B.C. They had debated what to give someone who had created the universe and agreed that the best gift of all would be to provide service to those who needed it. So they got together and cooked a big meal, and dished it up to the poor at the local homeless shelter. This good deed was their gift to Michael. Will had asked them to do something more than merely serve food, so Vincent told the homeless that the group would also “feed” them a story about stone soup.

“A hungry man once went into a neighborhood to ask for food. At the first house he came to, the man who answered the door rebuffed him by saying they had no food to spare. The same thing happened at the second house. He continued to be rejected until he had almost covered the entire neighborhood. When he reached the last house he asked for a pot of water instead of food, explaining that he wanted to cook up some stone soup. He then took a round stone out of his pocket to show the man at the door, indicating that this stone would be used as the base for the soup. The homeowner was intrigued and agreed to provide him with the pot and water.

"The hungry man then lit a small fire under the pot and began stirring the stone in the water. This unusual sight aroused the curiosity of all the neighbors and they all came out of their houses to see what was going on. As they leaned over the pot to observe what was being cooked, one woman remembered that she had some carrots in her garden that needed picking which she could add to the pot. Another hurried home to get leftover potatoes. The first man who had turned away the hungry man got into the spirit by bringing out a portion of leftover roast to put into the pot, and before long a good soup began to take shape.

"By the time the soup was ready to eat, nearly everyone in the neighborhood had contributed something. They ended up eating the soup with the hungry man and it turned into a bounteous feast."

The story was a good one for these homeless people and they commented favorably on it as they were being served their meal. Will liked it. Michael did too. Vincent had brought his son, Riley, along, and the boy had been deeply impressed.

The group's service was one of Michael's favorite gifts.



Roland was packing his gear in preparation for the long drive home when he received a phone call from spa's power-walking instructor who'd had the day off.

"Hello, Roland. Are you checked out yet?"

"Not yet," replied Roland, "but it won't be long. Why?"

"Well," she said, "I can't fraternize with the guests as long as they are checked in at the spa."

"Consider me checked out then," said Roland, laughing. "What's on your mind?"

"Well, I was wondering if you'd like to come over to my house for a visit. I live about twenty miles from the spa."

The invitation interested Roland very much and he quickly grabbed a pencil and paper to jot down directions. He finished loading his car, checked out of the spa, and, with the snow still coming down heavily, headed straight toward the woman's house.



Machiventa called the teachers to order.

"Today I would like to speak on the topic of forgiveness. Do you remember when Jesus was questioned regarding how many times one should forgive another person? Jesus made it clear that not seven times, but seven times seven times would be required. Indeed, one problem on this world is the lack of forgiveness. Forgiveness starts with the individual. People are very hard on themselves and find it difficult to forgive themselves for their mistakes.

"God forgives instantly. He does not hold grudges. Mistakes are meant to be learning exercises. It is only when one refuses to learn and refuses to advance that a problem arises. Even then, those individuals are not doomed to suffer God's wrath and vengeance, as is taught on this world. God is never wrathful or vengeful but loving and caring, and a good parent. He allows His children to continue making mistakes until the lesson is learned. He desires to see all His children progress and succeed, and provides them with opportunities to do so, if not on this planet then on the mansion worlds after physical death.

"So develop lessons on forgiveness this week and ask that your students not only forgive themselves but also forgive those who do them wrong. Remind them that no one is too far gone to be forgiven. Keep in mind the bandit and murderer who, on the cross next to Jesus, asked for and received forgiveness. That former sinner is now on his way to Paradise, just as those on this planet are, albeit unknowingly for the most part. That is my instruction for today.

"We will speak again tomorrow."



The subscribers on the Internet bulletin board observed that interest in the Teaching Mission was becoming more and more international. Seekers from many countries were finding their way to the Internet, which became a tool for freedom of knowl-

edge and expression. The ability of despots and governments to shut off information to their people was falling, and with it the demand for truth was rising.

A fertile ground for the Correcting Time.

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“People find truth in many different places,” Machiventa began. “Truth cannot be the exclusive property of any theology or philosophy. Although the Urantia Book is a very pure source of truth, its contents were, in large part, taken from many human sources on this planet. Truth may be found everywhere.

“When people on this planet find something that resonates within them as truth, they tend to immediately assume that it is the exclusive source of truth. They begin to crystallize their beliefs accordingly, and become intolerant of other avenues to truth. This is not only true of the formalized religious denominations, but also with Urantia Book readers and others who have found truth in non-traditional forms. This is unfortunate and we must attempt to dissuade people of this notion of exclusivity.

“To the discerning eye, there is truth in all things. And truth is ever expanding as the seeker’s understanding broadens. A truth to one person may be gibberish to another who is not yet ready to hear it. Yet a concept that is initially rejected can, with time and the broadened experience of the seeker, prove to be not only logical but capable of being practically applied in that person’s everyday life.

“Therefore, let’s get out the notion to our students of truth appearing in many places. Let’s encourage tolerance of diverse beliefs and practices. Let’s counsel all to be open to truth as it appears. Let’s suggest that the good in all beliefs be emphasized

and supported, and the apparent error be ignored. We are not here to tear down error, but to support the truth.

"If there are no questions, then prepare your lessons accordingly. Thank you."



Will reflected on Machiventa's directive, but her lesson for the week was already prepared. She continued to emphasize each person's connection with God.

"Greetings to you all. As you know, the stillness practice has been one of our core teachings. In fact, if you discarded all of our teachings but one, we would suggest the stillness concept as the one you should embrace. Why? Because listening to the Father within is the best roadmap and guide you can have—much better than any teacher, because the fragment within you is of God. We, like you, are ascending mortals, just a little more advanced in our knowledge, so we do not hesitate to tell you that the stillness is the most important practice of all.

"Indeed, you would not leave on a long trip without first checking a map, yet you often embark upon a trip into the day without first consulting your best source of counsel. We are aware of the demands on your time, the crisis mode in which you operate, yet not one of you is facing a greater calamity or adversity than Michael faced when he lived upon your world as Jesus. He was betrayed, roughed up and put to death, but he never failed to be in contact with the Father. He had expressly chosen this dark, rebellion-torn planet to show the rest of the universe how to live a spirit-led life amid the harshest conditions, and he did so with such grace and composure that his example is the standard for the universe. Do not forgo time with the Father."



The closer Roland got to his instructor's house, the harder it began to snow. He thought he was on the rural road where her house was located, but the snow was falling so heavily that he was experiencing whiteout and couldn't tell any more. He began to

get worried as he couldn't even see the boundaries of the road and his old Volvo was not properly equipped for this type of weather. At last he spotted a row of mailboxes along the side of the road and pulled over to see if any of the names belonged to the woman he intended to visit.

As he squinted into the swirling blizzard, a white pickup truck pulled up beside him. The driver rolled down his passenger door window and said, "Son, you look lost. Who you lookin' for? I know near'bouts everyone in this valley. Maybe I can help."

Roland was surprised when the man referred to him as "son," as nobody had called him that in a long time. He smiled at his good fortune and gave him the woman's name. The man narrowed his eyes, saying he couldn't recall anyone by that name, but when Roland told him she lived in the loft section of a house that looked like an old barn, the man's face lit up. "Oh yes, I know the place," he said. "Haven't met the woman yet, though."

"Follow me and I will lead you to that house."

Although the experiences they were sharing were tremendously exciting and, at times, transformative to those in the groups, it would not be accurate to suggest that the students were becoming perfect or even getting close to perfection. Indeed, many often reverted to former bad habits and did not regularly take the advice given them by the celestials. While this was frustrating to the teachers, it was understandable coming from the humans. Change did not happen overnight when it involved human behavior patterns; the most that could be expected from a meaningful experience was a slow chipping away of the rough edges. Likewise, the slow and uncertain growth was discouraging to the student, who, expecting that his formerly abrasive attitudes and actions would fade away on their own, discovered that it required much work to make even the slightest changes of a permanent nature.

For the teachers it was proving to be a formidable task just to help change the humans under their supervision, much less the entire planet. They were fully aware that their best chances would come if they could teach the children before they adopted the habits of the adults. But the celestials were content to do what they could and resigned themselves to the fact that it would take many generations to effect the types of changes that would be necessary to change the world.

Luckily, they had time.



Machiventa called the teachers together to discuss marriage. Several marriages had failed even while the students were under instruction from the teachers and, of course, the disintegration of marriages generally on the planet was well known. It was a real problem because of the damage it did to home life and to the children involved.

"Today I would like to speak to you of family life and marriage. As you know from your studies, the family is the basic unit of stability in human society. Ideally it is the shelter from the storm, the source for unconditional love and the security against the cold winds of the world. It has, of late, been less than stable generally and the results are evident throughout the world. We need to speak to our students about these matters and emphasize the importance of family life.

"There is in this topic, as in the case of so many others, a delicate balance to be struck. Marriage and home life are important, but so is personal well-being and free will. Marriage is not a divinely mandated permanent relationship, as some believe. Many marriages are not beneficial to either spouse or to their children, and these are wisely dissolved. But I speak more of the transience and convenience that permeates the lifestyles of today's people. There seems to be a lack of desire to really attempt to make marriages work. To keep a marriage together in an open society such as that found in America requires much work, but the results are worth the effort expended.

"One of the problems is the belief that, as people say, 'the grass is greener on the other side of the fence.' People are bombarded with images of the perfect spouse, the perfect lover and the perfect parent. When a spouse doesn't live up to this mythical image, the assumption is that there is someone else out there who can. This assumption is largely false. Every person comes with their own baggage. No one is perfect. It would be better for our students to recognize that fact and work within their present marriages, rather than look for someone else. Again, this is a touchy subject and one where individual decision and free will are paramount. What we can do is offer general overviews so that

the students don't become deceived into believing that there is an undiscovered soulmate around every corner.

"I hope I have provided you with guidelines regarding this sensitive subject. Although it is difficult to give lessons on this without meddling in free will, it is imperative that the home life of this world become more nurturing for the children. The children are where the significant spiritual changes will be made and they need the protection and security that a loving home environment can provide.

"You should do whatever you can do to facilitate the strengthening of marriages and the nurturing of children."



In early 1994 Vincent had learned of plans for various Teaching Mission groups to come together for the first time at a national conference. It was scheduled for that summer, in Cheney, near Spokane, Washington. Most groups had never met members of any of the other groups, so there was an eagerness to get together and compare notes.

Vincent was the first to sign up. He also arranged for his family to join him after the conference so that they could take a vacation in Washington, a state they had not yet visited. More and more groups were arranging to send representatives. Vincent was astonished at how many different parts of the country now had groups actively participating in the Teaching Mission, all the more because they had each developed independently.

Quite an amazing faith promoter, he thought.

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Machiventa called the teachers to order.

“All right, all right! Let’s have a little order here! Today I would like to discuss the concept of joy. Many people are unhappy on this planet. Most of this unhappiness is due to their misunderstanding about the purpose of this life or their longing for worldly goods and services that they lack. An emphasis on materialism and the desire for youth and fame contribute to this general malaise.

“It is important for us to remind our students that love surrounds them, that they—and all others on this planet—are here to progress spiritually and to grow in their understanding of their citizenship in the universe. The more they can appreciate that they are spiritual as well as physical beings, the more they will begin to see their desire for fame and fortune fall away. The more they can accept their status as advancing personalities, the more service-oriented they will become. The more they understand that to give is more rewarding than to receive, the happier they will be. The more they incorporate their beliefs into their lives, the more fruitful their encounters with others will become. The more they understand their place in the cosmos, the more they will strive to become conduits for the light. And the more faith they have in the ultimate good of the plan for their lives, the less time they will waste worrying about what may happen to them in the future.

"As they grow in understanding, appreciation and knowledge, they will project a more joyful countenance. Why? Because they will see the love surrounding them, they will know for a certainty that there is nothing to worry about and they will cheerfully be about the Father's business. They will be in a position to enjoy the work and their enthusiasm will be contagious. When they are able to do that, they will be better missionaries than all those who stand on street corners shouting fearful warnings of impending doom to those who pass by. They will be *living* the message. And that, my friends, is where we want them to be.

"By their lives and the fruits thereof our message is best broadcast. So, let's encourage a path that will lead them to such a state of being."



Roland followed closely behind the white pickup truck so as not to lose sight of the taillights in the blinding snow. After a while, the brake lights came on and Roland stopped as well. There was a slight lull in the storm and he could see the man pointing to the right, in the direction of a house that looked like a barn. Roland got out of the car to locate the driveway and, satisfied that he could navigate it, turned to thank the man who had led him here.

As he turned around, there was nobody there. He hadn't heard the truck leave and, upon closer inspection, he noticed that the only tracks in the six inches of newly fallen snow were those made by his Volvo. There were none where the truck had been.

The hair stood up on the back of his neck.



From time to time Vincent would wonder if this was all real or if he was experiencing a mid-life crisis of sorts. He wondered whether the events which he deemed synchronistic were just rank coincidences to which he gave more credit to celestial meddling than he should. It isn't easy to keep a steadfast faith when all around

you the media and the consensus of public opinion tend to deny that such is possible. Still, it was reported that more than seventy percent of the people believed in angels, and that a majority believed that celestial realms really did exist! But it was also generally doubted that anyone had the ability to access them, except when the celestials needed to intervene to save someone for a particular reason. What really swayed Vincent when he was in this type of quandary, were the occasions where something would happen to demonstrate that this was no mid-life crisis.

Case in point. One day while he was feeling a little less than spiritual, he met a woman who told him the following story: At one time she had lived next door to a man with whom she was having a property line dispute. She and her neighbor had exchanged words more than once and she was consumed with anger toward him. The situation grew so out of hand that she even printed up obscene signs to flash at him whenever she saw him walking on his property. Her friends avoided visiting her during this period because they did not like having to listen to her hate-filled rantings and ravings about her neighbor.

One day the woman's mother and sister came over and she again began to vent her complaints. This made them so uneasy that they decided to make a quick exit. As they headed for their car, the woman followed behind them, pointing to the neighbor, shouting and cursing at him as he stood in his yard. At that exact moment, a bird swooped overhead and, in the plain view of her mother and sister, pooped directly on the tip of the enraged woman's nose.

The woman abruptly stopped her outburst and looked down at the end of her nose. Her mother and sister burst out laughing. The woman began to laugh also, suddenly realizing how foolish her anger had been. She took it as a sign, and from that day forward she changed her attitude about her neighbor, giving up the hatred that had been ruling her life. She made peace with the man and they settled their dispute. By surrendering the burden she'd been carrying, she became a happier and healthier person and her friends began visiting her again.

In telling Vincent this story, she marveled at how providence works. And Vincent was impressed with the marksmanship of

the celestials responsible for the incident. He laughed out loud as he looked up to the sky. "Okay, okay," he said. "I guess you *do* exist and help to push us along from time to time."

He kept an eye out for birds as he got in his car.

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“We are here to build bridges, not to knock down barriers.” Will was beginning her lesson for the week and she liked this analogy that Machiventa so often used. Jesus also used analogies when he taught.

“There are many barriers to people loving each other—cultural, religious, ethnic, sexual, national, racial, gender, and so many others that I needn’t list them all. The point is that there is no way to disabuse people of their fears by tearing down their barriers. It can’t be done. They cling tenaciously to them. Besides, those barriers are the things they have chosen to believe are important in their lives and we must respect their choices.

“We will not attempt to tear down any barriers. Instead, we will emphasize the good in each person we meet and build a bridge based upon our shared beliefs. You may wonder if you share any beliefs in common with certain people, yet I know that if you look closely you will see a multitude of areas wherein you can find common ground. It is there that you should focus. And by listening closely to people you will be given clues of shared beliefs. Instead of disputing their disagreeable stances, just emphasize the areas where you agree. You will find that by using this technique and avoiding being drawn into a discussion of the errors of another’s beliefs, you will come away from each encounter with a better

chance for a positive result. That does not mean that the person will give up their cherished but flawed beliefs, but a foundation will be laid, a seed from which may spring a higher concept than they presently hold. It is not your job to convince them to embrace such a higher concept. It is only your job to plant the seed. You get the easy work. Just plant the seed and let God take care of the rest.

"This is an evolutionary process. It will not happen overnight. Don't be disappointed if you don't see immediate results. All good work will contribute to the final goal of bringing this world into Light and Life.

"Try this method out this week and we will hear your stories about your attempts at our next meeting. Until then, my love and the love of the Father will be with you.

"Shalom."



Vincent continued to correspond with his friends on the Internet.

"Greetings to you all!

"Today is Sunday and, instead of a trampoline service, I took the family out to a place we call Turkey Roost, a 900-acre tract of land owned by a friend of ours. We walked amongst the tall oak trees, threw rocks in the lake, let the dog sniff out the local animals and, in the shade of a stand of trees, had our Sunday service. Lucy was with us, which made it special. Today I spoke of the need to exercise the mind, the body and the spirit. We each gave examples of different kinds of exercises. Everyone said that they liked the message.

"On the way out we saw a wild turkey running around on the property. I let my twelve-year-old son Riley drive around on the land. The weather was beautiful. This would be a good place for a Melchizedek school. Maybe one day. Until then, keep it between the lines!

"Hold high the mission! Vincent."



Vincent was often confused about what his role would be in this upliftment. He was also unclear about his own life: Was he doing okay? Was he egotistically involved? Was he truly a seeker? Was he shining forth the Father's light or was he just deluding himself? The answers were not easy to know. His family thought he had gone off the deep end. He took comfort in the fact that Jesus himself had had to deal with his earth family before he could engage in his mission. And, if all things happened for a reason and his life was taking the turns it should be taking, then perhaps his wisest course would be to simply go with the flow and continue doing the best he knew how.

And that is what he decided to do. No sense bashing himself for his shortcomings—he knew he wasn't perfect. If perfection was the standard by which kingdom workers were chosen, then there would be even less of them than there were now. So Vincent continued trying to do his best. He studied the transcripts and other spiritual literature. He also began writing, and was invited to be a columnist for the religion section of the local newspaper. This opportunity gave him a soapbox to spread the message of God's love.

All in all, although he felt that he was doing all right, he still wished he could do something big. Such is the nature of humans. They often can't tell when they are doing something big because their perspectives are skewed.

But what can you expect? They are humans.



Roland managed to guide the Volvo up the snowy driveway. He parked, got out, and walked up a flight of stairs to the front door. He knocked and waited. A few seconds later the door opened and his former instructor stood before him, her two German shepherds barking and shuffling around behind her. She smiled.

"I was afraid you wouldn't be able to find me in this blizzard," she said cheerfully. "Please come in."

Roland knocked the snow off his shoes and followed the woman up to the loft. He noticed a roaring fire in the fireplace in the kitchen, a comfortable living area, and, at the far end of the space, a cozy bedroom.

"I don't suppose you have any wine, do you?" he asked.

Will was taking questions. “For the moment, I would like to limit our question-and-answer session to stillness practice, since that is the thrust of our ministry. The floor is open. Question away!”

JOAN: *I have combined some prayer and visualization at the beginning of my meditation, then basically done transcendental meditation without the mantra. Biofeedback has shown that this produces alpha waves and a feeling of deep relaxation. Is this deep silence a suitable platform from which to focus on reaching the God without and the fragment within? Will this practice help me grow closer to God and synchronize my will with His? And can I use this same silence platform to focus on listening for inner guidance, or would it be better from a shallower level of meditation?*

WILL: Transcendental meditation and similar techniques of meditation are recommended except to the extent that they lead to obliteration of consciousness. Obliteration of consciousness is a difficult concept to convey. So long as your transcendental meditation does not fall below the state of relaxation, you do well. An absolute requirement of stillness practice, as taught in this ministry, is consciousness. Therefore we discourage people from becoming entangled in elaborate schemes of self-projection or identification with natural phenomena or celestial bodies in the sky, or practices such as astral projection. Where you are, who you are, is always good enough for God. You need not remake yourself. God loves you anyway.

God's communication with you is not conveyed in human words—certainly not in the English language nor in any language that we recognize. God's communication is spirit to spirit, spark to spark, forehead to forehead, palm to palm. You are becoming progressively spiritualized. As you make progress, your communication with the Father is more complete, has more depth, more breadth. You are increasing your contact area at the point of intersection, with results that I will leave to your imagination. That, too, is part of the experience.

It is not necessary to think certain thoughts or to listen to certain sounds or to repeat certain feelings which are spawned by the active communication with the heavenly Father. It is enough for you to earn all the necessary stripes simply by making yourself available for God. Indeed, that is the most important part. What you do or don't do, or try to do in addition to the simple fact of availability, is trivial. I can say with absolute authority that God appreciates you, He is waiting to share Himself, He is ever polite in His mannerisms. By making yourself available, you invite Him to enter your life.

Over the years of one's life, and through the normal ups and downs which vary from hour to hour, great variety is experienced in the type and tenacity of connection available with the heavenly Father. It is meant to be so. Jesus of Nazareth did not have a set mentality or point of view which he maintained throughout his life. He lived the full range as a human and experienced exactly the same surge of emotions—joy and disappointment, calmness and irritation, sadness and happiness—that each of you experience every day. It was not necessary for him to go to any particular place in order to communicate with the heavenly Father. If you find a practical and productive place where you make yourself available to the Father, we encourage you to go there, yet we will say there is no place where God cannot be contacted. The Father is always there. The only limitations on your communication with Him are those which you impose upon yourselves. This doesn't have to be a dreary exercise. There is no reason why communication with the Father should not be lighthearted and joyful. Availability is the key.

SUSAN: *Many of us become discouraged when we practice stillness, which demands us to be still. The problem is that when we close*

our eyes, our minds are flooded with thoughts, and the harder we try to keep them out, the more they intrude. We begin to feel that we are getting nowhere and give up in frustration. Should we just keep sitting still, trying to clear our minds?

WILL: You know that you were intentionally designed to be thinking creatures, so your thoughts are one of your chief products. I heard many good thoughts tonight—traded, traded up, improved upon—between the members of the group in your discussion about death and the afterlife. You might even say that thoughts are a part of the currency of the universe. I can tell you that in the afterlife people are not limited to having only profound thoughts. The interchange of ideas, expressed as thoughts, provides the vehicle for people to gain experience, to gain understanding, to gain wisdom from each other without the necessity of each individual having to personally discover every facet of the universe for himself. In order to arrive on the shores of Paradise, it is necessary to have seen all and to have grasped all, but you do not have to experience it all in your one material life.

So we do not prescribe that you attempt to stop your thoughts from entering your mind. Stillness, like life in general, is about focusing on what is most important. Simply let your thoughts pass through. They are only bit players on the scene. One of the flaws of the human ego is that it attempts to extend its authority into areas of the personality for which it is not designed. It will attempt to organize your thoughts and thereby unavoidably trivialize spiritual experience. It will seek to categorize and pair off in polar opposites those experiences which might otherwise be quite meaningful and productive to you. The ego does this any time you try to focus your attention, and it is naturally intended to function in this manner. If, however, you refrain from concentrating on a particular thought, that thought will float past and off the stage. Do not vex yourself over your thoughts. We recommend that you attempt stillness practice for ten minutes at a time, twenty minutes at the outside. If you find that you are burdened with excessive extraneous thoughts when practicing the stillness at your regular time each day, try experimenting with different times. You may find certain times of the day more conducive to the stillness than others.

CAROL ANN: *Am I just supposed to sit there and try to void everything?*

WILL: At this stage you will benefit more from regularity than from the application of any particular technique. Do not attempt to rule your thoughts for you will merely be combating one thought with another thought which is parried by another thought and thrust across with another thought. And in only a moment or two you will have sunk into a morass of warring thoughts. I prescribe regular practice first. Everything will settle down. It takes time. I do not mean this to sound harsh, but those who will not take the time will find the going very difficult indeed. It is a human skill to calm yourself. It is a human reaction to fill up all the empty spaces with chatter. You can overcome this tendency, but not by warring within yourself. Sit quietly and wait. Peace will come.

DENNIS: *You mentioned that we should not meditate for more than twenty minutes at a time, but when I meditate in a darkened room I am not always aware of how much time has passed. Is there any danger in getting too much of a good thing?*

WILL: The term "danger" does not accurately describe the situation. Let us say it like this: When we are just beginning, availability for the heavenly Father is what is desired most. Next comes regularity. Your frame of mind, attitude or mindset, or the particular time of day you practice the stillness, are not as important as your sincere and faithful attempt to practice on a regular basis. Because you are just beginning, short but regular sessions are an appropriate goal. Ten minutes is asked, twenty minutes at most. More than twenty minutes at a time would be unproductive at your stage of development. We have experimented with this at great length. To practice longer would not be offensive or even dangerous, just fruitless. But do not trouble yourself if you sit longer, as the heavenly Father is always willing to communicate. He will never turn His face away from one of His children.

HAL: *Will, do you have any comments about our physical posture during silence practice?*

WILL: There are a few things which affect stillness practice. We prefer, for example, that you do not attempt the stillness when you are physically exhausted. At such a time your body needs sleep, rest at the very least, and the Father will not interfere with

that. Neither should you take large doses of stimulants, such as tea or coffee. That would be equally counter-productive. Nor would it be effective if someone is in an agitated state emotionally, although we will say that the stillness practice is an excellent remedy for agitation and should work to swiftly bring you back into balance with your normal self. Such does not equal communication with the heavenly Father, however.

To answer your question, then, I will say that the ideal posture is an attitude of relaxed alertness—an erect position but relaxed, with the limbs in a natural, resting position—not twisted, tied or knotted in any particular mystical fashion. Body positions that interrupt the flow of physical energy can have a negative effect upon relaxed alertness.

JUDI: *I have four statements I would like you to comment on. First, our vehicle for spiritual growth is stillness, our connection with the Father. Second, making ourselves available to the Father is the key to the stillness but there is no specific form or format to follow. Third, the more we are able to listen to our indwelling spark of God and be sensitive to guidance, the more we will be able to trust our own insights about living our daily lives and get our lives more in tune with the Father's will. Fourth, as we approach the anniversary of this group it occurs to me that we have spent much time trying to understand communication because it is a phenomenon that's novel to us, but we are just now beginning to realize that stillness should be the important focus of our attention.*

WILL: I embrace themes two, three and four exactly as you have stated, yet I will offer a refinement about stillness practice as the method of spiritual growth. Long ago on your planet people in the northern hemisphere recognized that although the picture of the stars changed through the night, there was one star—the North Star—around which all bodies seemed to rotate. It appeared every night in exactly the same place and, no matter how much the other stars moved around it, that star could be relied upon to stay in place until dawn. The North Star is not bright. Knowledge of it made life more stable for those people, but not easier. It gave them a trustworthy tool for navigating the passages of life but it was not their method of transport. The North Star merely provided them guidance.

You are responsible for your spiritual growth. The First Source and Center has provided you with a way to have a personal relationship with Him. He is reliable. He is always there. Even when the blazing sun rises, He is still there—even if you cannot see Him. Your reliance upon that North Star is a tool for navigating the passages of life. It is not life itself. Decisions in your life are necessarily within your realm.

VINCENT: *Does the stillness practice contribute to the construction of the spiritual foundation within us, even if we feel no sensations while we're practicing it?*

WILL: Absolutely. Sensations are likely to be misinterpreted anyway. Spiritual growth will be revealed in your approach to your brothers and sisters and in the expansion of your capacity for love and kindness toward all with whom you share the material experience. The pursuit of sensations in no way differs from the ecstasies sought by the mystery cults of times past. It is a by-road. It is not necessary for you to feel, see, hear, smell, or shiver with any sensation in order to hear the word of God ring true in your heart. You are opening the door. What lies beyond the door is unfathomable except with spiritual eyes.

SUSAN: *When you talked about not seeking sensations, it made me think, do we go into that stillness somewhat on faith that God is talking to us whether we are understanding Him at that point or not?*

WILL: Heaven speaks not a word but acts always. God cannot be limited by language. He communicates to you spirit to spirit; there is no other way. That communication is possible through universal laws with which you are only vaguely acquainted. It is fine for you to speak to Him in words. What comes back to you is love.

D: *I prefer to remain anonymous on this question. If a person is under the influence of alcohol or marijuana or some other drug (not to the point of being mindless, just relaxed), does it interfere or somehow hinder the ability to receive spiritually?*

WILL: The effect of all drugs, including liquor, on the human mind is to render it more or less senseless. You are not damaging the heavenly Father, and the effect on yourself is only temporary, but your ability to perceive is somewhat diminished. Functionally it makes little difference whether one approaches stillness from

an attitude of natural excitement, natural depression, or unnatural sedation. The process continues unabated. The river of love flows over all. It is unstoppable. Though the most important thing is the act of spending time with Him, the Father prefers, when humans report for duty, that they bring along their full complement of wits.

We will continue this next week. When your opportunities arrive this week, choose the path with more love in it. That will always be the Father's path.

Shalom.

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Roland could not believe what was happening to him. Here he was, snowed in at the home of a beautiful woman, reclining in front of a fire, sipping wine and talking with her about spiritual matters. His dream had come true. What more could he ask for?

It was then that he noticed, on the coffee table, a how-to book on writing compelling newsletters. "What is this?" he asked, picking up the book and holding it up for her to see. "My buddy Vincent and I just happen to be in the process of putting together a newsletter ourselves, although it's only in the formative stages."

"You are the first person to see that book," she said with a smile. "I just received a box of the first printing from my publisher today. You see, I wrote that book!"



Machiventa again called the teachers to order.

"Okay, okay. Quiet, please! We have talked about the basic lessons we wish to impart. We have spoken of the difficulties involved. We know that most humans have short attention spans. We know that changing the world is a monumental task. We have heard your comments and suggestions and we know that many of you believe that you could devise a better plan than the one under which we labor. However, none of you has a wide enough perspective to understand the big picture.

"The plan that we are implementing is Michael's plan. Michael is monitoring the progress daily and will make changes when he feels they are necessary. What you must understand is that you are not being asked for your opinions on the plan—not that we don't value your thoughts—but this is Michael's plan and, until he changes it, we continue unabated.

"Michael is our leader and we are here to be of service to him and to his plan. I'm sure you appreciate that this Teaching Mission is not the only celestial activity taking place at this time.

"Much is being done to increase the spirit gravity so that more and more people are naturally led to take a spiritual path. Other programs are also in place that are designed to facilitate the transformation of this planet. The Teaching Mission is only one arm of the project.

"So, let's go forward on that basis and see what happens. I would remind each of you of the privilege of service you were granted when you were chosen for this mission, for which you had volunteered. You are all much loved.

"The universe watches."



Vincent was spending much of his time at the Little League park lately. His son was a rookie and Vincent, in addition to being the president of the league, was in charge of the umpires and statistics for the park. It was a lot of work, but he loved to watch the boys as they matured into good ballplayers. He felt that the coaches and the parents had been given a tremendous opportunity to set an example for the children. As the season commenced, the good examples far outnumbered the bad.

Vincent posted his synopsis to the Internet.

"Greetings to you all!

"Well, today was the first day of the Little League baseball season. We began by announcing each child by name and had them come out, one by one, onto the field until all ten teams stood on the first- and third-base lines. Then a woman came out and sang the national anthem. Finally, the mayor threw out the

first ball. As president (and commissioner, as I call the position), I gave a little speech reminding all the parents that we were “only” a baseball league to the untrained eye. In reality, we were assembled here for the purpose of providing good examples for our children to help them develop character, sportsmanship, and team cooperation.

“I remember reading that when Jesus was eleven, he accompanied his father, Joseph, on a business trip to a town where competitive games were being played in an amphitheater. This impressed Jesus so much that when he returned to Nazareth and suggested to his father that Nazareth should introduce outdoor physical activities for its youth, Joseph was horrified because the culture in which they lived believed such practices to be evil. Jesus dropped the subject in deference to his father, but he was not happy about it. I agree with Jesus that sport is an important and wholesome activity and, when run properly, can be a great way for children to develop self-confidence. It is also a valuable way for parents to meet each other.

“I just hope I can keep everyone focused on the true value of the game.

“Wish me luck! Cheers!”

Roland and his former power-walking instructor were discussing newsletters and how to make them effective, when he had a sudden urge to give Vincent a call, hoping to catch him in his office.

"Vincent?"

"Roland! What's up?"

"Remember the newsletter you and I were working on for the Teaching Mission?"

"You mean *The Correcting Times*, which you and I were *supposed* to be working on together and which I have done all the work on so far?"

"Yeah, yeah," laughed Roland. "Do you have it handy so you could fax it to me?"

"Sure. I suppose I could print it out," Vincent said. "What gives?"

"Never mind. I'll tell you later," said Roland hurriedly. "I'm in the middle of something interesting. Just fax it to this number and do it quick."

Vincent's interest was piqued, so he did as instructed. He would simply have to wait and hear the story later.

When the fax arrived at the snowbound home of Roland's new friend, it was dated February 1, 1993—one year to the day that the commencement of the Correcting Time was announced

in Los Angeles. Roland chuckled as he pondered the dates. Outside the snow continued to fall. Setting his feet up to warm them by the fire, he took a sip from his glass of wine and put his other arm around his beautiful companion.



Machiventa addressed Will regarding her concern about Vincent, who complained of being burnt out.

“Spiritual progress tends to occur in fits and starts. It is indeed an unusual person who can consistently stay attuned to the spiritual, while living in the material.

“Most influences of today’s culture attempt to push people into a consumerist attitude so that the material aspects of life are exalted over the spiritual. And it is not uncommon to be caught up in this because much of the attention conferred upon people on this planet is due to their youth, money and sex appeal. It is an effort to continue to stress the spiritual, so people will often slack off for a while to regenerate their energy for the path.

“Vincent is no different from anyone else in this regard. He started out in this pursuit with great enthusiasm, then saw it mellow into a more mature interest. But lately, between posting excerpts of teacher lessons on the Internet, attending meetings, writing letters, meditating, keeping a journal and attempting to contact teachers himself, he discovered that he just couldn’t keep it up.

“He had allowed his interest to knock his life out of balance. His work and marriage had suffered and he pulled back a bit to reallocate his time.

“Balance is often the biggest challenge of life, especially when there are children to raise, clients to satisfy and a spouse to pay attention to. Don’t worry, Will. Vincent will regain his balance and he will be fine. In the interim, just encourage him at every opportunity.”

Although Vincent was taking a break, he never missed his nightly visit to the bridge. For him, it was like a church service and he wanted to continue those visits. And, of course, the Mutt was also interested in her nightly trip to the park.

This spiritual path isn't easy, he thought. Then again, he saw that if he could incorporate it into his life, it could become second nature. He would work on it.



A new teacher was on hand to deliver the lesson to the group. The teacher was excited about the opportunity, had worked hard on the message, and hoped the students would appreciate it.

"I would like to give a lesson this evening on art—the art that surrounds you and the art of living. What you see in the natural world are the artistic endeavors of God, much of it planned in its appearance. The symmetry of the veins of a leaf, the colors of the flowers, the markings of the animals—are all executed with purpose. It is not haphazard; it is the combined artistic expression of certain orders of celestial personalities in the service of the Father.

"Next time you view the world around you, take a moment to see it with new eyes. Do not take the landscapes for granted but study them carefully for the beauty and the artistry of their execution—the form, the balance, the symmetry.

"Many of your flowers have fragrances, some of which you can smell and some of which you cannot; but the latter are perceived by other animals who depend upon them for their very existence. Feel the beauty in your heart; sense the beauty with your eyes, your nose, and also your ears.

"We then look at the next level of artistry, the art of living. Do you design your life to portray the Father, the highest exhibition of art? Or does your life unfold without your active involvement? The artistry of one's life, the way in which you live your life from day to day, can and should be a revelation of the Father's love for you. The way you greet your friends, the way you conduct your business, the way you express your creativity—all of these can be presentations of your artistry of life. Life can be an exquisite dance, a movement of human bodies in and around and amongst one another—interassociating, communicating, loving. It can be as if a great symphony is playing in the background.

"Consider, as you arise each morning, dedicating yourself and your day to the Father. Ask for His guidance in your expression of

your own interpretation of His love, which is your artistic creativity. As you progress in your ascension career, you will be afforded many opportunities to demonstrate your creativity, your artistry, whether it be through music, painting, dance or other types of art that are not currently available to you.

“I would describe true art as being any creative endeavor that leads the soul Godward, that crystallizes the emotions of time into the thoughts of eternity.”

41

Many students in the Teaching Mission were becoming interested in finding effective ways to spread the Father's light. Some thought mass communications would be the best avenue, and considered advertising in major newspapers, on the radio and on television. But the teachers did not encourage these methods, pointing out that when a spiritual concept is presented in such a way it tends to lack the impact of a demonstration of the principle in the course of a personal encounter.

Truth, they told their students, cannot be transmitted through such a non-personal approach. It must be transmitted from person to person, one person at a time.

But the students were impatient.



"The life of a human is so short and pitched that his or her perspective is limited. Planet Earth has so long been in isolation that the inhabitants are ignorant of the ascendant career that is open to them. They see things only from the viewpoint of this planet and are deprived of the compassionate guidance of the celestial teachers who appear on a normal world. And so we have come to begin the process of healing the planet and teaching truths to its population. As you know, this is no ordinary planet. It is the bestowal planet of our Creator Son, Michael—

Jesus—the planet where he demonstrated how to live a perfect life on an imperfect world. His example is known throughout the universe and held up to children and adults alike as the model to emulate. Yes, this is a ravaged sphere, yet it was once the home of our sovereign and will become the jewel of the universe, a shining example of the effect of the love of the Father on an evolutionary world in time and space. Each of you will do your part, and the humans who desire to participate will do their part. And we shall not fail!”

With that, Machiventa ended his impromptu discussion with several of the new teachers.



Some people are more sensitive to spiritual influences than others. Many members of the Teaching Mission group Vincent belonged to were capable of communicating with the teachers, but Vincent himself was never able to consciously connect. He read many books on angels, near-death experiences and other paranormal occurrences, and longed to make celestial contact himself but, try as he might, nothing happened. This didn’t really bother him, and he presumed he would hear the teachers when the time was ripe. The desire for celestial contact was contrary to the basic teachings of the Teaching Mission, which emphasized recognizing the spiritual in everyday encounters. Vincent tried and was moderately successful in seeing the Father in all things. Still, he wanted to see a Melchizedek—or at least an angel.

On the bridge he would petition for such an experience. He had even asked for Machiventa to walk on the bridge with him one night, and as soon as he had uttered the words, he looked up to see a bright star shooting across the sky. He was thrilled because he had never before seen such a dramatic display in the several years he had come to stand on the bridge at night. He took it to mean that he would, one day, walk the bridge with Machiventa.

He hoped he was correct.



The students quieted down as the teacher began to speak:

“Life on an evolutionary planet teaches many lessons. These lessons are learned through difficulty and effort. They are not miraculously acquired. As you grow spiritually, the material counterpart follows. The material difficulties of time and space provide the evolving mortal with the dynamic tension necessary for growth to take place. Along the way, as you progress in your Earth evolution, milestones occur. The first milestone is the realization that there is a God, the second is the desire to find Him, and the third is the desire to be like Him.

“When you desire to find God, it is evidence that *He has already found you!* Each of you knows God in your own heart, and the next step is the desiring to be like Him: *‘Be ye perfect, as even the Father in heaven is perfect.’* In order to be like God, it is then necessary to translate your knowledge of the Father into real life activity. And because the Father is the supreme server of all universe creation, it follows that to be Godlike—to be like the Father—we must, in turn, serve. Our class is now moving into a new realm of activity, one where we begin the actual experience of spiritual service.

“There are several levels of service that you may render to your brothers and sisters: one, material service, where you assist in providing the material things of life; two, the intermediate level of service, intellectual service, where you impart knowledge; and three, the highest and most important service, that of sharing your inner spiritual sureties with those who seek those truths. It is in this level of service that we are called to teach, and in which you are called to act.

“It is not necessary to stand on a corner and cast your pearls before swine. It is only in the personal sharing of one personality with another that this service can be rendered in its fullest. We have discussed how to recognize truth seekers and how to recognize those who have crystallized their beliefs, and you have all attained an understanding of the difference. You have also acquired the ability to recognize in the eyes of your brothers and sisters that desire to know what you know. And we must be willing to share that knowledge, that feeling, that experience of knowing God.

“As you go through the remainder of your lives, it is hoped that you will adopt in your mannerisms a certain air of God-know-

ing, a fragrance that is quite sweet, that will draw the truth seeker as a flower attracts the honey bee. And it is through freely giving that nectar of life that you will share the sustenance that will bring one more soul into the kingdom of God and, thereby, complete one more step toward this planet's emergence into Light and Life."

42

Roland eventually told Vincent the full story of what turned out to be a three-day snowbound adventure with the lady author of the newsletter book. He thanked Vincent for his part in the affair by faxing him the unfinished *Correcting Times* material, because the teacher quotes in the newsletter had opened the gate for Roland to share the second set of transcripts he had brought along from Utah. The woman reiterated that she had been interested in getting to know him all along, that as a spa employee she was prohibited from having personal relationships with customers, and that she had waited until Roland's had checked out before acting upon her desires. Roland had expressed a wish to be in a romantic setting, in front of a roaring fire with a beautiful woman and a bottle of wine, and his wish was granted beyond his wildest imaginings.

Here was another synchronistic on-the-road-with-Roland story, and another example of prayers being answered, this time almost immediately, thought Vincent.



Vincent had often wondered about coincidental happenings in his own life, and as he continued on his search for spiritual meanings, he began to pay more attention. He discovered that there had been many more of these incidents than he had previ-

ously recognized. He was beginning to see a pattern in many of his encounters. He found that when he attempted to walk in the light, the light provided him opportunities.

One day, while he was perusing his email, Vincent was surprised to find a message from a professor of philosophy in a Moscow university. In flawless English the Russian introduced himself, explaining that he had stumbled upon the bulletin board by “strange” chance, lurked for a while, and liked what he read. At this time the Russian population was increasingly engaged in spiritual seeking, no doubt because of the decades-long repression of religious and spiritual expression as well as the bleak financial situation brought on by the fall of Communism. The professor expressed an interest in obtaining the Urantia Book, and Vincent offered to send him one.

The next day, at the homeless shelter where Vincent served food weekly, he was notified that something had been dropped off for him at the front desk—a copy of the Urantia Book that he had loaned to someone several years earlier. He laughed to himself as he picked it up, and sent it straight on to the Russian professor.



It took the book a long time to get to Moscow and, unbeknownst to Vincent, the professor had taken a month off to visit his mother in a distant town, so nothing further was heard from him. Vincent put the matter out of his mind until he received a message from his friend Byron, a strong supporter of the Teaching Mission. Byron mentioned that he had been given a free trip to Russia to speak at a spiritual convention, and that he was leaving the following Friday. On hearing this, Vincent emailed the professor to see if he had received the book and whether he could meet with Byron during Byron’s visit to Moscow. The professor responded immediately, confirming—with profuse thanks—receipt of the book and agreeing to see Byron. Vincent forwarded the professor’s address and phone number on to Byron, marveling at the coincidences that had led to this turn of events.

Vincent was excited about the possibilities and looked forward to hearing stories from the trip. He conveyed to Byron his hope that one day he himself would also be out on the road meeting people and spreading the light, but that his time had not yet come. Vincent had long believed that he was more effective with strangers than with those he already knew. He operated on the premise that when you meet someone you will never see again, you can be more fearless in your actions and more freely reveal your highest convictions.

Vincent also envisioned that someday he and Roland would share travels on the road together, that they were the perfect match for two-and-two work. Vincent prayed for the opportunity, but for now he was content to help raise his children. Still, he carefully paid off all his debts and saved his money.

He wanted to be ready.



Lucy, while outwardly skeptical of the spiritual journey that had enraptured her husband, was not without mystical experiences of her own. She often told their children that the first time she saw Vincent she knew that she would marry him someday. Was this instant recognition of her future spouse the result of celestial influence? The teachers mentioned, from time to time, that they have been with their charges from early childhood and have attempted to nudge them in certain directions, though they are never permitted to interfere with free will. Vincent himself had received a vivid mental picture of himself and Lucy in their later years sitting together on a porch in rocking chairs, and he would recall this image each time he and Lucy had a row.

Lucy also had the uncanny ability of thinking of someone immediately before receiving a phone call or letter from them. Vincent believed that if Lucy ever decided to apply herself to daily stillness practice, she would be able to communicate with the teachers before he ever would. Lucy believed it too, which is probably why she resisted the practice. Still, Vincent could not deny

that Lucy was a stabilizing influence in his life, the one element that kept him grounded in the reality of the material world.

But even Lucy was unable to stem his enthusiasm for the mission.

43

The teachers gathered for their daily briefing. Today they were discussing the conferences that their students were organizing. All were abuzz with the possibilities and prospects that such gatherings would provide. In the middle of the hubbub Machiventa called the meeting to order.

“Okay, okay, let’s calm down.” As the teachers took their seats, he continued, “I know that you are all interested in the upcoming gatherings. I, too, see tremendous opportunities for growth in these get-togethers. Up until now each group has been isolated. As a result of this isolation, questions have arisen regarding the veracity of this process. The gathering of many groups, none of whom was aware of the others, will be a faith promoter. Each group will get to meet the members of the other groups and verify that they, too, are regular people with regular families. This is not a ministry for those devoid of judgment or common sense. Friendships will be forged. Our family will grow. And we will be there to assist in the process.

“I would like each teacher who will have a transmitter in attendance at the upcoming conferences to prepare special lessons to be given at those meetings. Transcripts will be kept of those teachings, and we want to have jewels of lessons for the participants to take back to their friends at home. Our emphasis should be on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, but I will leave the specifics up to each of you. I would like you to run

by me what you have prepared prior to delivery so we can coordinate the timing.

“This is an exciting development in this fast-expanding mission. Its growth is a sign of the spiritual desire of those on this backward planet. Continue to encourage your students to take ten minutes a day in the stillness to listen to the Father. Until we meet again, I know you will continue to keep up the good work. Each of you is to be congratulated on your resolve and diligence in this mission. Although it will take quite a while, we have a foothold and we shall not fail!”



A spiritual path often has no clear signposts—at least that is what Vincent felt. Yet, as he reflected upon the amazing things that had happened to him in recent years, he had to admit that, from time to time, he could see or feel God’s hand directing things. And the group was told by Will that the more they could see with spiritual eyes, the more they would be able to discern the spiritual in the mundane. Vincent hadn’t reached that stage yet and wondered if he ever would.

He thought that perhaps he was destined to have the role of someone who was not sensitive to spiritual leadings but who would assist by using his judgment to figure out how to make the best use of material realities for the mission. Nevertheless, he was diligent in his daily seeking of the stillness. He was very social and corresponded regularly with members of all the other groups, sometimes calling them on the phone for encouragement.



In August of 1993 Vincent attended a Urantia Book conference in Montreal and enjoyed it, experiencing his most powerful meditation there. Those who were interested in the Teaching Mission at that conference—sixty of them—had assembled one night to hold hands in a circle for a group meditation. Vincent had felt a spiritual energy flow through him during that stillness, and when it was over the woman standing next to him

commented on it as well. Afterwards, a member of his own Tallahassee group, someone who claimed that he was able to vaguely visualize the celestial teachers during their meetings, came up to him and told him that he had “seen” Michael present in the middle of the room during the meditation. Vincent asked him what Michael looked like, and was told that Michael was very tall and a very bright light. Vincent was satisfied that something extraordinary had happened, and was willing to believe that Michael had made an appearance in their midst, though he himself had not perceived him.

All of the positive experiences Vincent recalled from that first conference made him even more determined to travel to the two gatherings that were now being organized especially for the Teaching Mission, the one in Washington and another on the California coast, which was being called SpiritFest. He worried a bit about his ego, wondering if his true motive was to be a big shot in the celestial realms, but he decided that, while he couldn’t rule out the push of ego, he felt spiritually led to participate. And he left it at that, but resolved to monitor his motives to be sure he was not participating for improper purposes.



Will picked up on Vincent’s concerns. This led her to give a short lesson on ego and its effect on people involved in the Teaching Mission.

“You asked why we encourage you to share the Urantia Book and then help others to read and understand it. This is a very important step in the Correcting Time. Studying this textbook will enable many to stay balanced during this time of extraordinary energy releases and mental communications. Without a firm grounding in cosmic citizenship, our efforts to guide you into leadership roles for the Correcting Time could cause dangerous out-of-balance fanaticism and self-aggrandizement. If at any point we become aware of an uncontrolled ego or manipulation antics, we will pull away and wait for stability to return.

“There can be no failure of Michael’s plan, only delay and changes in methods utilized. Remember, this participation op-

portunity on your part is brought to you by your prayer requests, decisions and willingness to be a living vessel of truth. No mortal is perfect—nor could they be at this stage of development—but when you are ever striving to fulfill the faith-perfection urges within your consciousness and allow them to be expressed in your outer life, then the universe views you as you will be in perfection, not as you are now during your mortal beginnings.

“Therefore, as you make decisions, we move mountains to help you attain your goals when they coincide with Father’s divine plan. But things may not occur in the manner you expect them to. If you withhold your light—regardless of how faint—through shyness, modesty or inhibitions, then you help to retard the progress which could ripple throughout this planet and encourage those who are ready but reluctant to step out in faith.

“Light and Life is a state of being so permeated by goodness that you dedicate your complete consciousness to listening to and expressing the God within, growing to be more Godlike and acting to influence your loved ones to take up the pathway. Don’t just talk about it, but walk on the path to show how it is done for those who have not yet started or who are floundering in doubt and fear as you once did. This is how you can teach others. Even unrest and emotional clashes between individuals can be used as teaching tools. If all are working toward solutions with an attitude of emotional balance and with a desire to rise above appearances, they embrace truth, beauty, and goodness.

“With these guidelines, you can accomplish great strides in spiritual living.”

44

On Sunday mornings Vincent would take his children, Riley and Katie, out to the backyard and give them a spiritual lesson while they all sprawled out on the trampoline. He called it the "trampoline service," and he gave the kids the choice of attending that service or another at a church nearby. Invariably they chose the trampoline.

On the trampoline, Vincent and the kids would first lie on their backs and silently look up at the treetops, the birds, the clouds and the sky. Then he would give them a short lesson on some spiritual topic, followed by a parable for them to figure out. Through the use of parables he was able to convey to them concepts of truth, beauty, tolerance, love, service, faith and goodness. Although Riley and Katie often seemed uninterested, he knew they were listening because sometimes he overheard them repeating the stories to their friends.

Finally, Vincent would read them a little from the Urantia Book, mostly incidents from the life of Jesus when Jesus was their age, so they could draw their own comparisons. Vincent never failed to honor Lucy's request to remind the kids that these stories were from the Urantia Book, and that not everyone—especially those who believed the Bible to be the inerrant and unassailable word of God—agreed with these accounts.

If nothing else, Riley and Katie enjoyed the time with their dad. They even surprised Lucy's parents when they told them

that Vincent was the source of their spiritual training, a task traditionally performed by the mother.

Vincent's only disappointment with the trampoline service was that Lucy never joined them. She just wasn't interested. Vincent vacillated between trying to persuade her and keeping quiet to avoid being a pest. Because he was sensitive to the possibility that his enthusiasm would be interpreted as fanaticism, he never pushed anyone to believe as he did. It wasn't necessary, he realized. The best way he knew to demonstrate his faith was through his actions, and that is what he tried to do. He wondered if anyone was noticing.

When you grow up in a society that desires instant gratification, it is difficult to have the patience necessary to see the long-term effects of any action.



Byron emailed Vincent. He had located the Russian professor, who had shown him a splendid time in Moscow, but somewhere along the way Byron had lost his wallet containing his two credit cards. He suspected that it had been stolen from him while in a market. He was concerned about the cards and instructed Vincent to take steps to have them canceled to avoid unauthorized charges to his account.

Vincent dutifully attempted to cancel both cards but only had success with one. The other card company would not cancel the card without written consent from Byron. Oh well, thought Vincent, I did what I could.

He put the matter out of his mind.



Vincent's trampoline preaching and his stint with the black congregation stimulated the interest of the celestials. Machiventa wanted to send a message to Vincent telling him to go to the churches to see if they were teaching a personal relationship with God. Will also thought this would be a good general exercise for the group, so the next Sunday she made her request:

“Machiventa and I have a task we would like you all to perform. We wish for you to become keenly aware of how other believers come together to attempt to share their knowledge of and love for the Father in heaven and His son Michael. It will be useful for you in your ministry, which is yet some distance away, to understand the methods and techniques others employ in leading their followers on a genuine search for the Father. For this reason we have asked Vincent to initiate a survey of the church preachers in your area. It is a large task. Any of you are welcome to assist him in this project. Each of you has contact with one or more groups who are seeking to deepen contact with the Father. Go visit them and see what they are doing. Observe and take note whether they are helping others to deepen their personal relationship with the Father or whether they are developing the dogmatic pursuit of intellectual or spiritual enlightenment.”

The group, which was favorably disposed toward these exercises, immediately went out and began reporting back from week to week about what they learned. They came across many preachers who taught what the group considered a very pure version of the love of God. They also came upon preachers who ruled their flock through fear, intimidation and judgmental proclamations against members of other denominations. But, happily, they encountered fewer fire-and-brimstone preachers than they would have in the past, in part because these preachers couldn't hold the interest of today's more enlightened population.



It is often difficult for people on this world to believe that anything exists other than the material things they can see, hear, touch or smell. Yet suddenly there seemed to be a great awakening on the planet, a great interest in things spiritual.

Angel books proliferated and were on the bestseller lists, and surveys were showing that most people believed in angels and other types of spirit guides. Vincent, out on the trampoline discussing these things with Riley and Katie, asked them to look up beyond the trees and the birds, at the sky. With their eyes fixed on the heavens, he began a discourse on the spiritual worlds beyond,

which, he explained, we cannot see with our limited human senses. He told them angel stories and read letters from people who had been helped by these higher beings.

He then read them his weekly installment on the life of Jesus, so they could feel an affinity to him. He reminded the kids that when Jesus lived on this world, he did all the same things that they did, that he was tested with the same situations and predicaments people on this planet are faced with—poverty, death of loved ones, taxes, betrayal, love, work, play, family and friends.

“That is why he understands our problems so well,” Vincent explained.

45

One thing about this spiritual path business, thought Vincent, is that it does encourage a person to give their problems over to God. He had talked to God more during this period than he had ever done before, and on a regular basis, and to God's ministering spirits as well. From time to time he even felt that he was getting answers to his questions. With his eye on the eternal, Vincent found it hard to take his material problems too seriously. Not that he didn't work toward their solution, it's just that he didn't obsess about the outcomes as much as he used to. "If nothing else, this is a wonderful stress reliever and ulcer-abatement technique," he told Lucy, and she laughed.

Fear was slowly being replaced with serenity in his life.



Byron emailed Vincent again. "Don't cancel my credit cards! I found them. They weren't stolen after all. If you cancel them I won't be able to get out of Russia."

Vincent chuckled. He'd been wondering why he couldn't get the second card company to cancel Byron's card.



Vincent went to a law firm retreat to listen to a consultant talk about the law firm of the '90s and what it entailed. The con-

sultant spoke of a certain man in the audience who was able to get the best out of his employees wherever he went. After the talk, the consultant sought the man out to learn about his unique methods. The man admitted to no special abilities, saying that all he did was speak informally to each employee and ask them what they wanted to be remembered for. This made them think about their goals and got them out of their everyday routines. He advised them to do what they enjoyed doing—that life is too short to subject oneself to drudgery. And this was his secret in encouraging his employees to think about who they were and where they were going, and consequently, be more effective employees.

Later Vincent was discussing this concept with a counselor he and Lucy were seeing, and the counselor put the question back to Vincent: “Want do you want to be remembered for?” Vincent thought it over, then responded, “I want to be remembered as a light worker.”

She didn’t understand, so he explained.

“A light worker can be engaged in any activity. A light worker can be rich or poor, white or black, fat or thin, young or old. Anyone can be one—it has more to do with attitude than anything else. It involves the conscious effort to be happy, kind, friendly, unselfish, tolerant and helpful. It involves planting seeds as you go by. It involves service to those in need. It involves being a conduit for God’s love to all you meet. It is a lifelong work. It is a joyous work. It is what I would like to be remembered for. Of course, I still have a long way to go. I still stumble, but I am determined to do my best to be a light worker.”

The counselor said she understood the concept, but still wondered out loud, “How can people overcome the ‘dark side’ of themselves—the anger, the fear, the hatred?”

Vincent confessed that he was no expert in this, but offered his ideas nevertheless: “First,” he theorized, “you must recognize that every decision is a freewill choice and not just a reaction to an event or an experience. This must be realized and understood so that everyone can accept that they are in control of the dark side of themselves. Secondly, each person must become aware that negative responses are detrimental; they are not persuasive or attractive, and ultimately are not in the best interests of the person

choosing to exercise such responses. Each person must understand that it is only to their advantage to purge themselves of their dark side and let the sun shine in.

"The negative emotions—hate, fear, anger, jealousy, rage, violence and intolerance—are all spirit poisons," he maintained. "As a result, people should be able to see that it is up to them to choose their behaviors and that they would be better served by choosing the paths with the most love in them. And that," he concluded, "is my theory on how people can teach themselves to be light workers. It's all very logical, and beneficial to the person making the choices, and the result will be a person who can operate in the light. The more light workers, the more this world will change for the better.

"My goal is to assist in that process."



On June 17, 1994, Vincent boarded the plane for California with his laptop computer and a stack of disks containing Will's lessons. He was on his way to SpiritFest, a Teaching Mission conference put on by a group of Californians in the coastal town of Los Osos. He was to be picked up by some Internet friends he had not yet met in person, though he had often spoken with them on the phone.

When Vincent had first found the Urantia Book discussion group on the Internet, he was excited and immediately sent posts telling them of the existence of the Teaching Mission. To his surprise, he was met with mean-spirited responses accusing him of delusions and being a tool of the devil. Whoa! This was a surprise, and yet it taught him that he could be most effective with a kind word in response. As he continued to post excerpts from transcripts and weather the condemnation, he noticed that those who were most vehement were actually polarizing everyone else and providing him an opportunity to show forth the kindness that he said the Teaching Mission had taught him. It influenced people much more effectively than any words he could have posted. And he was happy that such benefit could come from such negativity.

Another lesson to be learned and applied in other areas.

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When Vincent's plane landed in California no one was there to pick him up, so he sat down and waited. Previously he might have been upset or concerned, but now he was happy to sit and wait. He was in no hurry. He turned on his laptop so he could add to the story he was writing about all this. Soon an airline employee tapped him on the shoulder and told him he had a call. It was his friends. They were caught in traffic in Los Angeles and wouldn't be able to pick him up. No problem.

Vincent rented a car and headed to SpiritFest.



Roland was also on his way to the California gathering. He, too, knew quite a few of the expected attendees, having met many of them not long before on a trek around the Northwest and down into California where he visited some of the groups that had sprung up lately.

Before leaving on that trip, Roland had packed his trunk with food and water. In the event that he had to drink local water that was not to his liking, he included a lemon to squeeze into the water for flavor. Driving from Utah to Oregon, he stopped in Idaho to visit a friend, and while there purchased a bottle of Riesling wine as a gift for friends in San Francisco. There was a certain

absurdity to taking an Idaho wine to California, but Roland just chuckled at that thought as he headed west.

After spending a week in Oregon meeting with members of the Corvallis Teaching Mission group, Roland felt his personal teacher, Amster, urging him to head south. Without looking back, he took off in his beat-up Volvo and drove down the coast, aiming for Newport Beach in California. He hadn't gone very far down the Oregon coast when he felt the urge to stop in the small seaside town of Waldport.

In Waldport he began to look for a restaurant. The town seemed to have only churches and bars, so he headed for the bars. He drove slowly past several, but none appealed to him. He was about to give up and pull into the very next bar when he saw a small establishment off the main road with a sign advertising "Bar and Grill." He drove over and parked in the lot around the back.

Inside were several tables and a pool table. Roland sat at the bar, ordered a beer, and began studying the menu. Several other men were sitting on stools at the bar, and two women and a man were racking up balls on the pool table and chalking their cues. One of the women edged over to the bar and approached Roland.

"Excuse me," she said, "but we need another person to round out our game. Would be interested in playing mixed doubles?"

"Sure," Roland replied, and, beer in hand, walked over to join in the game. After introducing themselves, Roland casually asked the group what they were doing here. They said they were counselors for a program called Throwaway Kids, based in Eugene, Oregon. This group gathered up children whose parents were unable or unwilling to continue raising them and attempted to provide the kids with a stable, loving environment in which to grow.

One of the women then told of a sad and frustrating case she had been unable to resolve. One of the seventeen-year-old kids in the program had had an identical twin brother who was recently killed in an automobile accident. The surviving twin was devastated and would barely communicate with anyone. It had been several weeks and the counselors were discouraged and at wits' end. They had resolved to let time heal the boy's grief, but their concern that he might not make it brought on a palpable sense of

desperation among the counselors. To help the boy they had organized a campout for the entire group on the beach near Waldport, but even that was not working. The three counselors had taken a break from the campout to come to this bar, to eat and relax and discuss what could be tried next.

Roland listened intently. Offering to buy a round of drinks for the group, he asked what they'd like. The woman who had told him the story of the twin boy stunned Roland by answering that her drink of choice was Riesling wine with a slice of lemon. Roland stopped in his tracks, realizing that he was again involved in something, somehow, having to do with the spiritual flow. He looked at her and said, "I believe that I am here to help you with your troubled boy."

The counselor laughed at the idea that this bearded pool player would even suggest such a thing. Roland said, "I'm often called on to assist those who need to hear the word of God."

She realized then that he was serious, but was not convinced that it would be prudent to permit him into their campground, much less to speak to the fragile boy. Roland, sensing her reluctance, said, "Do you believe in synchronicity?"

By now all three of the counselors were gathered around Roland. Although none of them had been able to help the distraught boy, they were at least professionally trained, unlike this rough-looking character they had encountered sitting on a bar stool in the local pub.

Roland continued, "If I were to tell you that I have a bottle of Riesling wine and a lemon in the trunk of my car, would you then believe that this was a sign to you and allow me to try to help this boy?"

The woman laughed nervously, looked at her colleagues for support and, finding them intrigued, said, "Okay, if you have the wine and the lemon in your trunk, I might consider it." Still somewhat skeptical, when Roland made a move to go outside to get the wine she insisted they all go along as witnesses.

Outside in the dark they gathered around the Volvo as Roland popped the trunk open. Inside, the light came on, revealing a small cooler. Roland lifted the lid and inside was bottled water and a bright yellow lemon. He picked up the lemon and handed

it to the woman. Then he reached down beside the cooler and picked up a rolled-up towel. With a flourish, he removed the towel to reveal a bottle of wine, turned the label around to face the others and, sure enough, it was Riesling.

Although dutifully impressed, the still-hesitant woman said, "Okay, I will give you a chance with this boy, but let me tell you this: These kids are streetwise. They can see right through any insincerity." Roland smiled and nodded in silent agreement.

They all drove back to the campground, the woman riding in the car with Roland. After meeting and greeting the children, Roland asked about the twin and was directed to a boy sitting alone by the campfire, staring into the flames.

Roland had no idea what he would say, but he trusted his intuition. He sat down beside him and began staring into the fire too. He continued to do this for quite some time until at last he turned to the boy and said, "I hear that you have been troubled by the death of your twin brother."

Roland waited. After a time, the boy looked up and said, "Life has no meaning. We live, we die, and that's it. There is no God. How could there be? If there was, he wouldn't allow someone so alive as my brother to be snuffed out in an instant." Roland said nothing, but continued to watch the boy, who was beginning to weep silently. "There is no purpose to this life," the boy said between sobs. "I don't know if I even want to continue living."

Roland nodded and agreed that it could appear that way. He knew that teenagers had one of the highest suicide rates in the country because of their tendency to feel despondent over what appeared to others to be insignificant events. But this was no insignificant event and Roland could feel the boy's pain.

They continued to stare into the fire together.

Finally, Roland said, "I have come here to deliver a message to you."

The boy turned to Roland, his cheeks wet with tears. Roland looked him straight in the eye and, after a long pause, said with authority, "You are the son of God."

The boy sat stunned for a moment, wondering if Roland was telling him that he was the Messiah. After a moment he responded, "If I am the Son of God, then who are you?"

Roland put his hand on the boy's shoulder and said tenderly, "I, too, am a son of God. I am your brother."

The boy grew silent as he deeply absorbed Roland's words.

Knowing that he had just delivered God's message, Roland left the boy by the fire and went back to the group of counselors, who had been watching intently from the sidelines. Dinner was being prepared and they invited Roland to stay, and he readily agreed as he had not eaten since noon. But first, he opened the bottle of Riesling and poured a round for everyone. As they were about to take their first sip, one of the counselors noticed the twin boy talking with the other children—and smiling! They asked Roland what he had done in such a short time that they had been unable to do after weeks of effort. Roland lifted his glass and offered a toast to the love of God.

After dinner all agreed that Roland should stay the night, as they had an extra tent and Roland had a sleeping bag in the Volvo. As they were preparing to retire, Roland and the counselor who had warned him about kids spotting insincerity instantly were talking when the twin boy came up and asked Roland, "Do you think we'll be working together?"

Roland smiled and said gently, "I think we already have worked together."

With that, the boy looked deep into Roland's eyes. "I love you," he said, his statement moving Roland to tears.

After the boy went to bed, the amazed counselor said to Roland, "I guess you passed that test."

Early in the morning, before anyone else had awakened, Roland gathered his sleeping bag and departed without saying goodbye. On the table, however, he left the empty bottle of Riesling with what was left of the lemon sitting on top.

He wondered what those beautiful people would think when they remembered the events of the evening before.

He was not soon forgotten.

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The celestials watched as their emissaries went about their missions. It was always a blessing to see their plans work out. Roland's recent experience especially touched their hearts and was the topic of the teachers' lessons for the next day.

"We have all been attempting to influence mortals to assist their brothers and sisters while at the same time respecting and honoring their free will. One of the advantages we have when our students spend time in meditation and in communication with us is that we are able to suggest such opportunities. Roland is particularly well suited for this activity as he regularly listens to us and has the relative freedom to pick up and go on a moment's notice. Each of our students has unique talents and different constraints on their time. Not all can be involved in this kind of ministry, but you should evaluate where your students are at any given time and what circumstances impact their availability.

"You should also be cognizant of persons who are within your students' spheres of influence or who are capable of being reached by your students. In this era on this planet there are more and more avenues available for people to connect with each other. Once you have identified a need, or a need has been identified by others in our ministry and communicated to you, you will be asked to participate in our attempts to bring about a series of events that will create an opportunity for your students to provide a service to the needy person. We will, of course, have alternative plans

in place if the events we project don't unfold as we hope they will. We are dealing with freewill creatures so there will be many missed opportunities. Don't be concerned about that; just continue to work with your students.

"This is an active ministry. We will encourage our students to become personally involved in the sharing of God's love. Now go and teach your students."



When Vincent arrived at SpiritFest, a marvelous event was in progress. One hundred people from all over California and the western United States were meeting and greeting each other. Children were running around, and a computer exhibit displayed the latest methods of communication available to people interested in the Teaching Mission around the world. At night campfires blazed, music was played, deer ran through the camp—a jubilant atmosphere. Vincent was amazed at how far the Teaching Mission had come since he was introduced to Will less than two years earlier. He marveled that most of the people here had never met each other before, yet now they were all acting like old friends, and their teachers were transmitting the same messages that Will had taught the Florida group.

It was a thrilling experience for all, and each participant left SpiritFest with new friends and a new faith that there was, indeed, something real and good happening on this planet.



After the conference, before they took off in different directions, Vincent and Roland, together with their new friends Jess, Scott, Carlos and Jerry, drove down to the beach to see the Pacific Ocean and to collect some stones for souvenirs. As they stood admiring the magnificent coastline, Vincent was reminded of a parable delivered by Abraham to the Utah group:

"There is a certain tree which grows in the wind. It is gnarled and bent and small and hearty. On the crag of the cliff, it looks down at the ocean and receives the mist from the tide. It looks up

at the sun and receives the warmth of her light. It clings steadily to the rock's face and is secure in its place there. Having grown amid so much wind, there is not a wind that can bring it down."



At LAX on the way home, Vincent got lost and was waiting for a shuttle to take him to the proper terminal. Rather than becoming concerned about possibly missing his flight, he kept his eyes open. He had long since learned that when something like this happens, not only does everything work out all right in the end, but he might find himself in a location where he can assist someone.

It didn't take long before a young woman approached him and began telling him about her predicament. A UCLA student, she had been expecting someone to pick her up at the airport but now realized that her ride was never going to appear, she had nobody to contact, and she did not have enough money for transportation to the university. Vincent immediately gave her the fare, and told her that, rather than thinking of repaying him, she should pass it on to the very next person she met who was in need. Feeling good about having been given the opportunity to help someone in distress, Vincent continued on to his flight which he made in plenty of time.

When he got home and told the story, he was advised that the request for money was an obvious scam often used on travelers at large airports by young women. Vincent laughed. "Perhaps so," he replied, "but I responded to a request for assistance, so from my perspective it was a complete success and uplifted me much more than protecting my ten dollars would have done. And who knows? Maybe the experience of seeing goodness in action will awaken the girl to an awareness of higher values.

"What she did with the money is of no concern to me."

Vincent's first article for the Religion section of the newspaper was on the topic of adversity. Early on he had decided that his articles should be generic so that no one would be put off by denominational beliefs. Adversity, he thought, would be a good first topic because everyone has something in their life which they believe to be painful, unfair or problematic.

ADVERSITY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND TEST YOUR FAITH

Every person you meet has faced, is facing or will face adversity in their life. It is one thing all human beings have in common. And much of the adversity appears to be unearned, random and unfair. So what is the deal with adversity? Many people deny the existence of God because of the injustice, adversity and pain in life, saying that God would not permit such activities to go on. But maybe we are missing something.

First of all, we know that we all have free will. We can do what we want. We will suffer the consequences or reap the benefits of our actions and will learn accordingly. But adversity doesn't only strike those who are deserving. Look at poor Job. He was just suffering. Although he was assured by his "friends" that he must have violated God's laws, he knew he hadn't. But he didn't give up on God. And all that he had was eventually restored.

You have probably heard the story of the Chinese man who was adept at interpreting events. When his son's horse ran away and the villagers were consoling his son, the man said, "How do you know that this isn't a blessing?" When the horse came back later with a stallion and the neighbors were praising his son's good luck, the father said, "And how do you know that this isn't a disaster?" When the son, while riding the new stallion, fell and broke his hip, he bemoaned his bad luck but his father, again, asked if this might not be a blessing. Then war broke out and all the young men were conscripted into service and ninety percent died in battle. The son, whose hip was broken, couldn't go and therefore he and his father were able to grow old together.

Having such limited vision, we must have faith that God has something in mind no matter what happens to us, and we must look for the best in each experience. We must look for the lesson. Untested faith is incipient faith. By having faith during a crisis we can be an example of what a spirit-led person can be. In your times of crisis, set an example for all others to witness and you will be shining forth the light of the Father.

Not long after this story was published, Vincent and his family were eating out. A friend dropped by their table and asked Vincent, "When does the horse come back?" It was clear that the friend was suffering from some adversity and had found comfort in the story, but he was impatient.

Many people commented favorably on the article to Vincent. He was pleased that it had the power to help and inspire them in their times of adversity. He hoped he would remember its counsel when it was *his* turn to suffer. He promised himself that he would, but he wouldn't be able to tell until it was upon him.



At the group meeting, Will delivered her message for the evening:

"The universe is designed so that will creatures who have chosen the path to the Father may have every opportunity for

growth and development. It is necessary at times to place before them challenges that necessitate decisions that nurture the soul within them. They make choices that help the soul grow if their decisions are aligned with the will of the Father in heaven. We watch apprehensively when one of you falters and then finds a firm footing on steady rock. It matters not that the footing was shaky at first; what does matter is the final outcome. Be patient with yourselves as we are patient with you. God only knows how long it will take for you to acknowledge your own weaknesses and turn to Him for support.

"Some of you think you have the ability to tread the waters alone. Such is simply not the case. You must learn to rely upon the Father in all situations. He will be ever vigilant in helping you. Be not afraid, but rather be confident in His love for you and in His ability to see you through all problems you may face.

"Once you are finally aware of the reliability of your heavenly Father, you will turn to Him first. There will be no need to spend even a moment in fear. Anxiety will pass you by and you will no longer be concerned about the future. Be not anxious about tomorrow. Sufficient is today and the troubles thereof. He is with you always."



Vincent was preparing to take a shower when Lucy came running into the bathroom, obviously distressed. She said she had been waiting with Katie at the bus stop for the school bus. When the bus came, it picked up its passengers and began heading down the street. At the same time, a nearby neighbor came out of his house to get his newspaper. His dog was following behind him, but, as the bus rounded the corner, the dog unexpectedly ran into the street and was immediately struck by the bus and killed.

Vincent knew the neighbors and their dog very well. The couple's grown children had all moved away, and their dog had become like another child to them. From time to time the dog would escape from his owners' fenced-in yard, and Vincent would catch it and let it play with the Mutt until the neighbors came home.

Lucy had witnessed the whole tragic incident. The neighbors were distraught and crying, she reported to Vincent, and when she left, the dog was still lying in the street.

Without a second thought, Vincent threw on his clothes, jumped in his car and drove over to the neighbor's house, intent on helping in any way he could, including removing the dog's body from the street if necessary and disposing of it. But when he arrived, the dog had already been taken away. Vincent hesitated, wondering what else he could do. On impulse he rang the doorbell. The wife opened the door, her eyes red from crying, and told Vincent she had never before seen her husband in such a state. Vincent was also in tears, because he too had loved the dog and was reliving the pain he'd felt when one of his own dogs had died years earlier. His empathy made him reach out and hug the neighbor, and they both had a good cry together on the front doorstep.

When he got home, Vincent felt much better. He knew that his concern and compassion had made the neighbor feel better, too.

Opportunities come when you least expect them.

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Some who read the teacher transcripts complained that the information they contained was too basic and that it was repeated too many times. Many of the lessons were really just a discussion of the golden rule. Yet the teachers reminded the students that the underlying message is love, and that while it is a simple concept, the application of it in everyday life makes it difficult.

One day, one of the members of the group heard a message from his personal teacher, which he summarized to the group: "We would now like to talk about aerobics. As you know, an aerobic exercise in itself is not a difficult thing to do. It is the many repetitions that build systemic strength. It is the same for spiritual aerobics. Many repetitions of a small action are far more valuable for growing spiritually than attempting one gigantic feat all at once. If, for instance, you climb up one step at a time, you will eventually reach the top of the Empire State Building. It would, however, be impossible to leap from the sidewalk to the top of the building all at once. The quickest way to reach the kingdom of heaven is to start walking in that direction."

And so it was. The small steps of individuals were emphasized and the impact of those small acts of kindness was what would transform the planet.

Or so they said.



It was clear to the celestials that if this planet was to be transformed, the basic component of civilization—the family—must be strengthened. Family was indeed the source of the safety and unconditional love which was necessary to foster the type of individual who would eagerly accept the challenge to step out in love. Without the model of a stable family base, the love of the Father would be just another phrase, another utopian goal, more pie in the sky. The teachers were intent on emphasizing the need for couples to work harder at marriages and for families to become sanctuaries of love and stability. The groups under celestial supervision were, themselves, a form of extended family and they were told so as often as possible. Indeed, it was important for each person to view all others as members of that extended family. At a recent meeting, Will commented on this concept:

“A return to the preeminence of the family is the prescription for continued progress. By this we do not mean for civilization to go backward in time, to the social milieu of centuries past, for the glorious days are not in the past but in the future. We wish you to reinstate and incorporate the structure of the past family into the societies you find yourselves living in today. A strong family is the primary building block of civilization and the essential school-room of all mankind, and with the upward-looking, spirit-guided love of brother and sister, you have the potential to form a type of family which has never before existed on your planet, a family relation which will lead your world directly into the ages of Light and Life, the ultimate in social development and the living embodiment of the divine plan.”



It was becoming more and more apparent to Vincent that he had been called to do something, but he was not yet sure exactly what it was. He obviously could not quit his job or desert his family to go forward and spread the word, because to abandon his commitments would be doing just the opposite of what he understood his role to be. He knew that his first priority was to provide for and set an example for his own family, before he could go out full time and do the same for someone else's.

Still, he could feel himself changing. He now very rarely drank alcohol—a marked departure for him. He also found himself less inclined to spend what little free time he had watching television. And, after a knee operation, he dedicated himself to its rehabilitation and, in the process, had become more active physically. In the past, because he was naturally slim, he had given no thought to food except how it tasted, but now he began consciously eating foods that contained less fat, and, for the first time, he and his family were watching the nutritional content of their meals. In short, Vincent was trying to peel away many of the bad habits he had so eagerly embraced for most of his adult life. It was yet another of the peripheral transformations that were becoming evident in his behavior.

People noticed. And Vincent felt better—more alive.



The teachers knew that it was important for their students to evidence the fruits of their teachings, and the main lesson they wanted them to go out and demonstrate was that of unselfish service. They were pondering how to teach this concept as Machiventa called them to order.

“Well, you all happen to be discussing a topic close to my heart and one which I had decided to expound on today—that of unselfish service.

“The search for happiness on this planet and others like it is often characterized by the drive for accumulation of material goods. Most advertising is designed to create the image that happiness will result from buying a particular product. This is illusory, of course, but most people cannot see the illusion until they have acquired an overabundance of possessions and find that they have still not achieved happiness.

“The churches, too, are often driven by this same set of values, utilizing their donations to erect monuments to their congregations. Is this a beneficial way to allocate their resources? Many turn away from religion today because of the failure of the churches to resonate truth to the people.

"True happiness can be found in giving, unselfishly, to those in need. And when you so instruct your students, remind them that it is personal service that is sought. Giving a check to a worthy charity is a noble gesture, but it does nothing for the giver. It is not money that is the primary need, but personal service. Please pass that message on."

And Will did just that in her weekly meeting:

"The Father in heaven has no use for money; He is already spectacularly housed. What the Father asks for cannot be bought, only given, and only from the hearts of individual humans. The Father desires that you show your love for Him, who needs nothing, by service to your less fortunate brothers and sisters, who need everything. For just as the Father lives in you, so does He live through your brethren. If you truly desire to show your love and respect for the Father, then put your riches to work in His name. There is nothing in your larder that is too precious to place before these, His children.

"The Master taught truly when, near the end of his ministry, he praised and defended the woman who used expensive oils intended for the burial and lavished them on his feet while he was still with them in the flesh. Is that not the better use? What will you pass on to the next generation? This empty shell of a building, for them to divine its purpose? Or will you begin from here, building the living church that the Master taught, by putting his enlightened and progressive teachings into action this day, in this place, for the Father to look upon with loving approval? Time is wasting, and only so many days are allotted to each of you.

"If not today, then when do you propose to be about the Father's business?"

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Machiventa addressed the teachers about rumors that were being circulated.

“Folks, I want to remind you that rumors of different events, including the promise of Michael’s imminent return, are not confirmed, although Michael has indeed promised to return some day. But, this Teaching Mission is less about events than about a process. Indeed, this planet will not change because of an isolated event; it will only change when the events happen daily and are exhibits of unselfish love delivered from one individual to another. In order for that to happen, it will be necessary for the people of this planet to have an attitude adjustment, and that adjustment will require the inhabitants to move from the selfish, materialistic perspective they now cling to, to a more loving outlook. The movement from one position to the other will take time; it will progress slowly at first, then gain momentum like a snowball that becomes an avalanche.

“So disabuse your students of the belief that a particular event is being anticipated as a significant stage of this Teaching Mission. The key is to look for the spiritual in everyday events, for the mundane to become opportunities for loving service. When people learn to unite the common with the divine, then will they take the first step toward selfless service and loving kindness, then will the Correcting Time be in full swing. So let’s not set the stage for disappointment by intimating that the success of the Teaching

Mission is dependent upon the occurrence of a particular event, because that is not the case. This is not to say that something dramatic will not happen, but their faith should not be rooted in such wishful beliefs. Have them ground their faith in the Father. Have them live in the present, not in the future. Have them assist in the planetary upliftment by transforming themselves and then passing the Father's love to all they meet.

"Then will we see the Correcting Time begin to have an effect on the attitude of the people of this planet. Then will we see changes in the perception of what is important on this planet. Then will we be able to move this planet to a higher consciousness. And this is planned to be accomplished without the need for dramatic events or displays of celestial power. Remember, the Father works in subtle ways. Teach your students accordingly."



Every Thursday Vincent went to the Good News Soup Kitchen to serve the homeless. He also, from time to time, brought along his family, his friends or his co-workers so that they too could experience the opportunity of serving those who are the least well-off in the community. And many of the volunteers were truly touched. Vincent's children were affected, and they better appreciated their own blessings, just as Vincent had hoped they would. And it had the same effect on him.

On this particular Thursday an unfamiliar face appeared at the kitchen. New people regularly showed up to partake of the free meals, but this man stood out from the rest and he repeatedly made eye contact with Vincent who was pouring drinks for the diners. After the meal, the man walked over to Vincent and asked if there was anything he wanted to tell him. Although Vincent had nothing specific on his mind, he quickly answered by saying, "Yes, I want you to know that there is a general spiritual upliftment in progress. Not religious, mind you, but spiritual."

The man's eyes grew wide and he said, "I knew there was some reason I needed to talk to you." He began to tell Vincent about his life—a difficult one, full of heartache, pain and adversity. There were obstacles he had to overcome, betrayals he had to

forgive, injuries from which he had to heal and addictions he had to give up. His life had been a series of crises and apparent defeats. Yet there he stood. He had survived and was a better man because of it. He professed his belief in God and his desire to continue on in this life for the greater glory of God. He thanked Vincent for the words of encouragement, then turned and walked away.

Vincent was surprised by this unexpected encounter, but saw that he too received a lesson from it. He saw that the man was a living testimony to his faith. Even in the depths of despair, even while eating a free meal at a mission kitchen, even after losing his wife, his children, his job and his health, this man demonstrated that he could live through it all and still have faith. Vincent was humbled by his own basically untested faith. And while he did not desire to experience a life like this man's, he hoped that if and when adversity hit him, he too would be able to stand tall and have complete faith in the Father.

That night he prayed for such faith.



Vincent often spoke to the Teaching Mission group about the people at the soup kitchen. From time to time, the whole group would go there to prepare and serve food to the homeless. It was after a discussion about volunteering again at the kitchen that Will decided to give a lesson on this topic. A question her students repeatedly asked was, "How should we react to the seemingly endless stream of homeless and destitute people asking for money in the streets?" Many of her students were concerned about the needy yet were reluctant to step out and offer assistance, either because they were afraid to interact with them or because they were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem.

"The fact that the Creator Son's bestowal life took place on this planet is a guarantee that there was no rougher example, no more spiritually bereft or morally adrift planet than this. It has its compensations, however. From the celestial viewpoint, this planet presents the greatest range of opportunity for service known within this local universe. There is more barbarity, more inhu-

manity, more desperate poverty here than on any other world in this universe. We call this opportunity.

"It is difficult for you in your North American society to imagine the circumstances of those who live on the outskirts of society, whose very existence is peripheral, who are counted by no census, whose families and names will never be known outside their own kinship groups, who may or may not survive into adulthood. Your media daily confronts you with depictions of the poverty and despair of some of your less fortunate population groups, yet I will say that there is no desperation equal to those who are the castaways of your own society.

"The people you propose to serve through your acts this evening are the rejects of your own society. They know that they are not wanted. They know that there is no place for them. They know that the curtain has come down for them in a way that is different both in degree and in nature from the ordinary tragic despondency of poverty. These castaways know that they will never receive the degree of attention that your own cats and dogs receive as a matter of course. It is difficult for them under these circumstance to maintain any desire for further connection with the human race. Their circumstances compel them to live in their own separate society surrounded by wealth and opulence with full knowledge that they will never participate.

"Therefore I direct you, should the occasion present itself, not to satisfy yourself with the thought of providing them a meal, but to use the meal as a vehicle and attempt to establish a human connection. By letting them know that they are not adrift and completely cut off, and that they have a place in the human race, you will be performing the work of the kingdom. These are the people the Master referred to when he described the poor in spirit. You are encouraged to serve people like these who feel that they no longer belong to the brotherhood of man.

"And I commend you."

51

Vincent was making an effort to do as Will had suggested in her many lessons. He was spending time each day in the stillness. He tried to see each person he met as a child of God. He was keeping an eye peeled for service opportunities to present themselves. He was always trying to impart love to those with whom he interacted. He attempted to get rid of all vestiges of hate, fear, intolerance, jealousy and the like. And he tried to pass on a good attitude to all he met.

On this particular day Vincent was registering with a state agency for a license, as required by Florida law, to represent an athlete who had been drafted out of college by the NFL. The negotiation process was to begin the next day so he had only one day to get the license.

He walked into the state office building with the application. He was going to try walking it through so as to avoid any delays, but immediately ran into resistance, as the state employees were not used to people walking into their agency. He caused quite a disturbance and someone suggested that he just mail in his application like everybody else. Vincent explained that he couldn't do that and asked that he be allowed to see the person in charge.

After an extended wait, and only after it was evident that he had no intention of leaving before seeing the supervisor, Vincent was ushered into a dour office and introduced to a woman whose negative attitude toward his unconventional behavior was palpa-

ble. Vincent tried to be upbeat but this got him nowhere. In the course of the conversation it came out that she was distracted because that day was the tenth anniversary of her late husband's death. Vincent sought to comfort her without being abrasive. He asked her if her husband had been a good guy. Her face lit up and she said, "Yes, he was. We had twenty-eight glorious years together. He pampered me the entire time!" Her demeanor changed right away and she asked Vincent what kind of law he practiced. They went on to discuss her mother, his family, and a variety of other subjects for almost an hour.

On his way out of the building—license in hand—Vincent thought about the shift in attitude he had witnessed in that woman's office and how his simple interest and concern had sparked it. He was sure that her day was better because of it—he knew *his* was. He got his license, and she got a dose of the Father's love, delivered to her by an unsuspecting messenger on the tenth anniversary of her husband's death.



Machiventa called the teachers to order. "Well, it looks like we have had to secure a larger facility with all the newly arrived teachers! That is good. Hopefully one day we will need a stadium to include all the volunteers assisting in the upliftment of this planet. I look forward to that day. To make that a reality we must all continue to prepare to be as effective as we can in the furtherance of this mission of love to this blighted planet.

"Isn't it interesting what the lack of normal training can do to a group of otherwise honorable people? When people are raised in an unfavorable environment they tend to skew their values and beliefs away from a belief in a loving and orderly universe. We hope to begin the process of education that is so necessary and so long neglected.

"One characteristic of this environment is the lack of forgiveness being offered. I have spoken to you about this previously. However, the subject of forgiveness is of enough importance and so little practiced that another discussion about it is in order. People are very hard on each other and very hard on themselves. This

is a barrier to love. It breeds the desire for revenge, for self-doubt, and for many related spirit poisons. You know that an attitude of forgiveness is essential to the path of enlightenment that we desire to foster. I would like each of you to prepare and deliver to your students a lesson or two on forgiveness in the coming weeks. I will be interested to see the perspective that each of you gives to this very important lesson. That is all for now. We will reconvene shortly for additional instruction and an update on how the mission is progressing.”



Daniel, a celestial teacher for a group in Idaho, had been a teacher in his mortal life and was therefore particularly adept at instructing his students. He worked hard on his presentation and tailored it to his students.

“Tonight I would like to talk about forgiveness. This is one of the hardest areas for humans to come to terms with. The Father already has forgiven you, this is true. His love transcends all and His forgiveness is total. Forgiveness has many different levels. Forgiving must not only be done on an intellectual level, but must come from your innermost being. This perhaps is the hardest part, for it is in this inner part where hurt and injustice is felt. In realizing forgiveness you must first be able to forgive yourself. Forgiving yourself comes about through learning who you are. When you become aware of your true values, your ideals, your motives, your desires and capabilities, you will know yourself better and thus forgive yourself your limitations. When you understand the motives behind your actions, it is easy to forgive yourself. Forgiving in this way is on the order of the mind, the intellect. This is the start. Once the mind can forgive, then you need to work on your inner emotions and feelings.

“Oftentimes when you think you have forgiven someone, you realize that in stressful moments the same feelings arise; then you know the forgiveness is not complete. This is understandable. It often takes time, but it is necessary that you continue to work on forgiveness. Your spiritual growth is not only tied up in this, it actually depends on it. So when you work through

your forgiveness, come to terms with your own self first. Forgive yourself and then you will be able to reach out to others in forgiveness.

"There are many things that you personally should look at this week as you begin the forgiveness of yourself. Often guilt and forgiveness are partners. Guilt is not real; it is manmade. If you can get past this unreal guilt, then you are on the way to forgiveness. Forgiveness is like loving—once you are able to love, loving becomes easy. Forgiveness works the same way. So start this week with self-analysis to forgive those inner hurts you all carry around. When you have done this, then look to those you need to forgive. Let this become part of your being, part of your life.

"The Father can forgive all and we are all striving to emulate Him, so for this week let forgiveness be your mission. This is understandably not an easy task and it will take time. All things that are worth doing take time. As your teacher I understand thoroughly how difficult it is. As you learn to forgive, know that you are being helped. Your indwelling spirit is ever ready to assist you when your desire is strong. You will feel this presence if you are open to it. Let this inner guide assist you. Reach out as God has reached out to you and you will grow. You are all working at it and daily this is bringing about change within you. You are probably already feeling it. Again, know the Father's love for you and go forth this week with renewed awareness and dedication."



Vincent was on the bridge again and this time he was talking to his unseen friends about balance. He liked to have these kinds of discussions where he would reflect upon whatever was on his mind. Recently he had been tugged in so many directions that he was wondering about time allocation.

"You know," he said, "celestials may not have the same kind of demands on their time. They may not even be subject to the dimension of time. But down here we have a lot of things to do and not much time to do them in. It is one of the reasons that we are so stressed out. From the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed, we have something that we need to do. At least, that is

our perspective. And how we decide to spend our time tells a lot about who we are and where our values lie.

“For instance, a lot of people are obsessed with their work, often to the exclusion of spending time with their family. Some are not happy unless they are watching a television show. Others are primarily focused on their church or sport or something else. It seems that everyone is in a time squeeze or has many conflicting demands on their time. I guess, folks, that these are some of the reasons that we have trouble taking ten minutes a day in the stillness.”

Vincent felt that he was on a roll, so he continued lecturing the celestials on balance. “People who are happy seem to be able to balance all demands on their time by practicing moderation in each activity. Now that those of us who are interested in this Teaching Mission are attempting to incorporate its teachings into our lives, the question of balance again becomes an issue. I would appreciate it if you would reflect upon this and perhaps give us a lesson regarding your view of a proper balance in this activity.”

When he finished making his request, Vincent looked into the night sky and thanked the Father for another day of health, and for the moon showering an iridescent glow on the landscape. And for no mosquitoes. Since it was winter, the mosquitoes that normally plagued him on the bridge were in hibernation and he thanked God for that. If it were up to him, mosquitoes would become extinct—or at least they wouldn’t bite people. But, so far, his prayers with respect to the mosquito situation had not been answered.

He would keep trying.

One of the hardest things about a spiritual awakening is the matter of having to continue living in the world. Most people who are “saved” or “born again” or “enlightened” are initially very enthusiastic. They are caught up in the spirit. But this enthusiasm is difficult to sustain. They expect the entire world to be caught up in it and then endeavor to alert everyone about the amazing transformation that is right around the corner. But when things don’t outwardly change, and wars and crimes continue to be reported in the daily newspapers, they can get discouraged.

And this was indeed the case with the Teaching Mission. Many people expected that there would be immediate changes, although the teachers told them that the changes would be one person at a time and would take perhaps a thousand years or more. In this world, where immediate gratification is universally desired, such long-term goals do not easily attract people’s attention.

But that is exactly what the teachers had to do. They had to provide enough stimulation and information to sustain the participants’ interest, but not so much as to cause their lives to become unbalanced. A difficult task. But they continued to walk that fine line. And the people involved began to take it upon themselves to do more and more outreach—with publications, newsletters, songs, Internet outreach and conferences.

For now, a balance was being struck and most were satisfied. As for the future, the participants were generally satisfied to wait

until it unfolded. Patience was finally being learned. Of course, it took longer to learn than the participants expected.



At a Sunday meeting, those in attendance were describing their experiences of the preceding week. Vincent had a story to tell.

"I was in Naples, Florida, at a closing dinner with several people, most of whom I didn't know. During the course of the meal, one of my acquaintances asked me if I fed the homeless. I admitted that I did, which prompted the elderly lady sitting next to me to tell about an experience she'd had when she was a young girl. She and a friend had lent assistance to a poor family, only to find that their help did nothing to alleviate the family's plight. She felt that the family had taken advantage of her, and because of that, she never again tried to help others in similar situations. She asked me how I knew that those people I served were indeed deserving or whether they were just mooching.

"I told her that it was not my job to judge their worthiness. My job was to provide service. And I did it as much for myself as I did it for them. By taking this attitude, I told her, I was able to lend a hand with good cheer. I would have done well to stop there, but I couldn't resist telling her that it was never too late for forgiveness and that you never know when someone will see the light and begin living their lives righteously. Even at this point, almost everyone at our table was in general agreement.

"Then I made my mistake. I told them that the best example of the fact that it's never too late to turn your life toward God is seen in the two thieves who were crucified alongside Jesus. While one of them scorned Jesus, the other recognized his divinity and asked for forgiveness, which was immediately given. This, I said, was clear evidence of my theory.

"Well, no sooner had I finished that story than one of the people at the table announced that my mention of Jesus had turned him off to my ideas! I had never before realized how fundamentalist Christians' use of the word "Jesus" when judging nonbelievers as condemned to hell so negatively affected a large segment of our society. And it isn't just Christians. It seems that all religions

tend to claim that they have the exclusive path to God and encourage their followers to either convert or condemn nonbelievers. All of these religions and denominations created barriers to communicating their universal message of love the teachers were trying to impart."



"The purpose of this mission is not to proselytize the words which are written in the Urantia Book, although we obviously embrace and wholeheartedly endorse that text. Still, the teachings expressed in that book are not to be invoked by you or anyone else as a justification for your intolerance toward your brothers and sisters.

"We have observed some people using the book's teachings as a means of maintaining a kind of thought discipline over their brothers and sisters, and that is why in this Teaching Mission we have little to say about the rivalries and disagreements between different groups charged with the dissemination and preservation of the Urantia Book. It is not relevant to our mission.

"While we are always willing to speak reverently of Jesus and his role, the simple fact is that the mention of the life and death of the man proves a barrier to many people. We are not here to overcome barriers. We are here to build bridges. We need only erect enough of a structure to go across.

"We are here bridging the gaps between people. That means no dogma, no credos, no tests, no money, no taxes, no requirements, only you people dealing wholeheartedly and openly with your material brothers and sisters whenever and however you encounter them, as if Jesus was standing by your side. By your every thought, word and deed, you are to show that you understand the full import of his teachings; that you act not for self-aggrandizement but as a conduit for the heavenly Father's love to flow through you unfiltered to the person with whom you are engaged. And, lastly, you are to do these things with appropriate reverence for the activities with which you are occupied.

"That is all we ask.

"There are no holy words which you or anyone else must utter. There is only service. And when you do these things, be-

come an instrument for the love of God which has been freely shared with you and with all your brothers and sisters. Freely has it been given to you, freely shall you distribute it—in kind, untampered, pure and undiluted.

“I am Machiventa Melchizedek. This is what I teach. I think that all of us see now that we have embarked on a project which will consume a great amount of time. It is a project that will outlast your individual lives—at least, the lives which we recognize in the flesh. You will be working on this project in the afterlife. The afterlife is not about self-absorption; it is about service.

“This is what we do.”

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The next week Vincent thought about the parable of the locked door. To the other side, you could break it down or you could locate the key and open it easily. He could now clearly see that they were not to tear down the walls, but to bridge them. They were not to look for the differences between people, but for similarities. They were not to be judgmental, but were to be loving and accepting.

This was contrary to everything that Vincent had ever heard about religion. He had always understood that it was “my way or the highway”—one religion after another preaching that it had the exclusive path to heaven or to God. But the lessons taught that there is no one exclusive path, that all paths would lead to God and that it wasn’t his job to attempt to change anyone else’s path, except by service and example. Wow, he thought, if this works at all it will certainly take a long time!

But time was one thing the celestials had plenty of. They weren’t too concerned about the amount of time it would take to accomplish their stated goal. The humans, on the other hand, wanted it to happen immediately.

Of course.



At the next meeting, a new teacher, Alphonso, delivered the lesson.

“Tonight I would like to speak to you about stewardship and the incorporation of the teachings we have delivered into your lives.

“It is well and good when you can see the truth in any statement; it is a necessary starting point. But, as you know, this mission is about more than just mentally understanding and assenting to the truth of a proposition. This mission is about incorporating our lessons into your daily lives.

“How you use the information you are given determines the effect it will have on those around you and, indeed, upon yourself. If you are unable to exercise your judgment so as to gracefully utilize these messages and lessons in your own lives, then you will most likely alienate those to whom you present these concepts. If your discernment of balance in all things is skewed by your enthusiasm for the message, the mission, or the events surrounding your enlightenment, then you will become fanatical. This is certainly not what we encourage—in fact, it is quite the opposite.

“It has been asked recently how people in this Teaching Mission will step forward in their daily lives to exhibit the truths found not only in these teachings and in the Urantia Book, but in other texts and lessons as well.

“This is a good question.

“You are to utilize common beliefs to emphasize the good in the person with whom you are dealing. And so it is that each of you is called upon to gracefully and effortlessly become the light worker you aspire to be. It should be a natural outworking of your inner guidance and your material existence. It should be the fragrance of goodness, truth, and beauty. It will lead to service to those you encounter. It should make you a person with whom others would like to spend time. It is an example they will seek to emulate.

“It is a balance of all things within your personality, and so it is not easy to define, except to say that your inner guidance should be consulted daily, so that your walk through this life will be more spirit-led, more attractive, more of a joyful dance, rather than a

struggle. Even in adversity you will shine forth this light, because you will understand that adversity, while not necessarily brought on by celestial agencies, is always an opportunity for experiencing growth and exhibiting the type of grace which we describe.

"Jesus was a master of this graceful balance. He set an example for a universe. You are now called to monitor your own activities so that you may become an example for those you encounter in your daily life.

"This is the stewardship of which we speak, that of translating the lessons you are taught into patterns of existence wherein you can more clearly be a conduit for the Father's love. If you can do this, then you've succeeded in your task. In truth, however, this goal is rarely reached. We ask that you try to see the good in all, to learn the lesson in all things, and to walk through this life with your head held high, exhibiting the grace that is a natural by-product of a spirit-led existence."



Vincent picked Roland up at the airport in Tallahassee. It was still the summer of 1994, before the second Teaching Mission conference. The two had been curious to see what opportunities they would encounter if they went on the road together, so Vincent took a week off from work, Roland bought a cheap plane ticket to Florida, and off they went.

There weren't many Teaching Mission groups in the state, but they knew of one group that met regularly in Sarasota, so they headed there first. Some of the members had offered to have a luncheon for them when they arrived. There were many bright lights in this group. Vincent had attended their very first meeting and had been impressed with their enthusiasm and sincerity. One woman, Normalinda, had been so excited about the possibility of a celestial outreach program that she said she felt like doing cartwheels. This kind of passion made Vincent smile. Others told him they also felt that something was in the air, and that they sensed a shift was in process. Vincent, not being particularly intuitive, felt nothing, but he was glad the others did. It validated his experiences.

On the way to the luncheon, Vincent and Roland got lost. Seeking directions, they pulled into a Zippy Mart.

Roland had an uncanny ability to draw people to him, something Vincent had first seen in him when they were in Utah inside a grocery store, where each person they encountered in the aisles seemed to be an old friend of Roland's—and yet, it was clear from their conversations that none of them had ever met him before! Outside the store, Vincent had expressed his admiration for Roland's magnetism, but Roland had laughed it off as coincidence. Yet an hour later, when the two stopped for gas, Vincent caught Roland handing the guy at the pump his business card after striking up a conversation with him.

So now that they were in Florida asking directions in the Zippy Mart, it was no surprise to Vincent that Roland managed to engage everyone in conversation—the owner and customers alike. Before it was over, he had them all congregated at the cash register debating the best route to their intended destination. Nor did it surprise Vincent when Roland gave them each a hug for the help. It was quite a show, and Vincent thereafter patterned his own actions after those Roland had demonstrated inside that Zippy Mart. That good-natured attitude, that openness, that smiling, joyful countenance—that's what Vincent decided to strive for in his own behavior.

A group of around ten people were waiting to greet them at the Sarasota luncheon. They had a stimulating time sharing how they had each discovered the Urantia Book and the Teaching Mission, and how each had been affected personally by all of it. It was a moving and inspiring afternoon, and a prelude to another meeting scheduled for later that evening.

With some time to kill, Vincent and Roland went to the local mall to walk around. "A good place for opportunities!" Vincent declared.

It wasn't long before those opportunities presented themselves.

While in a clothing store, Vincent and Roland were laughing and cutting up. The banter was so obviously friendly and personable that the clerk asked them if they were preachers. "Yes, we are," Vincent told her. "We are of an order of preachers that can-

not directly preach to others. We have to do it only through our actions and service to others. It is great that you have recognized that we are men in the service of the Lord because that tells us that we are successful in our attempts to give off the spiritual essence and grace that befits ministers such as ourselves."

The clerk was intrigued and asked them what were the basic tenets of their faith. "Well," said Vincent, leaning closer to her and looking around mysteriously, "we believe that all people are brothers and sisters. We also believe that God is our parent, therefore we are all family."

She readily accepted that.

"And we believe that we should each be tolerant of one another, as each of us has our own path back to God. Therefore, we don't speak badly about any other faith or belief system. Bad form, you know."

"Yes," she agreed, "I don't like people telling me that I am not worshipping properly or that I am likely to go to hell."

"You don't?" Vincent asked.

"No," she said. "In fact, I have been very much put off by supposedly religious people who had a holier-than-thou attitude, if you know what I mean."

"I sure do," replied Vincent. He glanced around and, seeing that there were no customers waiting, continued. "Then you can do what we do—treat everyone as a child of God, be optimistic about goodness ultimately prevailing, and smile upon all you meet. We call it a conspiracy of kindness. We are enlisting co-conspirators." With a wink, he added, "Will you help out?"

"Sure," she answered. "I have plenty of opportunities to do that in this job. I'll try it and see how it works out."

Vincent smiled at her and shook her hand. As he and Roland walked out of the store, they looked at each other with the satisfaction of having chalked up another successful encounter, another story to tell.

That night at the Sarasota meeting they recounted the incident to the group and a discussion ensued about the wisdom of people going out in twos. Later, when the teachers spoke at the meeting, Abraham came through Roland.

"Good evening. I am Abraham.

"You, now, have been enlisted into this incredible time for service at the beginning of what is known to us as the Correcting Time.

"Your mission is a simple one. Conduct your lives with a joyful countenance radiating the light of God. This will be so attractive to those who are willing to serve this mission and do the will of the Father that they will seek you out and ask you from whence this light comes.

"Your message to them is a simple one—the same as the good news that Jesus delivered almost two thousand years ago. Know by faith that your eternal Creator Father exists and you each are His spiritual children, here on Earth. Thus you become brothers and sisters in spirit, living to elevate each other with your love and service to one another, manifesting thereby the ultimate purpose of the creation—to love one another."

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After the meeting, Roland and Vincent were invited to spend the night at the home of one of the women in the group. Not having made a hotel reservation, they gladly accepted. That night they sat up, looking out over the water from the dock in front of the house and talking about the amazing possibilities that lay before each of them. The next morning, over a breakfast of fruit and cereal, the three held hands and thanked God for the meal and for the mission, and they each asked to better know His will.

Roland told the story of how dramatically his life had changed. "A scant few years ago I might have awakened in a strange woman's home, but it was usually because I had convinced her to take me home with her for more carnal pursuits. Now here I am," he grinned, "staying at a strange woman's home and celebrating the spiritual influences around us!" They all laughed.



After Sarasota, Roland and Vincent headed down the road to spend a couple of days at Vincent's beach house in Cape San Blas. Unusual things always seemed to occur when he was with Roland, but Vincent didn't expect much to happen while at the beach because of its isolated location. Then again, he wouldn't be surprised if something did.

Roland had his own reasons for wanting to visit the beach house. In Utah he'd had an unusual experience in which he found

himself traveling and witnessing faraway scenes. In that experience, he had “seen” the bridge upon which Vincent went each night to talk to God. He had also “seen,” at Vincent’s urging, the beach house they were about to visit. To test this visualization, Roland had drawn the bridge he had seen and faxed it to Vincent. Vincent admitted it was a fairly accurate description, except that Roland had shown the path leading to the bridge turning slightly left immediately before it crossed the bridge. Other than that, he told Roland, it was right on the money.

The night after he had received the faxed sketch of the bridge, Vincent was on the bridge talking to God when he looked down the path and noticed something he had not recognized before. The path leading to the bridge did indeed turn a bit to the left prior to crossing the bridge. Vincent laughed and thought about the extraordinary things that were happening to him.

On the other hand, Roland’s depiction of the beach house, which he also faxed, was not even close. When Vincent showed it to Lucy, she scoffed, “Well, he got the sand right!”

Roland was very curious to check out the beach house to see how far off he really was.



When they arrived at the beach, Vincent was distressed to find that he had forgotten his key. It was at home in Tallahassee, at least two hours away. He didn’t want to go back and get it after driving for five hours from Sarasota. Besides, it was late and they were tired. Vincent tried all the doors hoping maybe one of them had accidentally been left unlocked.

No such luck.

As Vincent and Roland stood on the porch discussing what they should do, Vincent leaned on the French door leading to the living room and it swung open, sending him toppling into the house. After he picked himself up, the two looked at each other, wondering if they were the beneficiaries of celestial assistance, and broke out laughing. It is amazing, they owned up, how many incidents and coincidences can take on a supernatural significance when two people are constantly expecting such things to happen!

Although they never resolved in their own minds whether they'd received heavenly help in getting into the house that night, Vincent noted that that door never again opened the same way when it was locked.



Meanwhile, throughout the country—and, indeed, the world—teachers were being more and more recognized. There was much skepticism among those involved, yet most were willing to venture forth and see what would happen. Many felt they were being led to the Teaching Mission or some other path which spiritualized their perspective. Others experienced incidents which they could only attribute to some kind of spiritual contact or intervention. Many could see synchronicity in the events that led them to their spiritual path, and they often asked the celestials whether these coincidences had been staged. The teachers, generally, refused to comment, but on this day in Washington D.C., after such a question, one teacher made an effort to answer it.

“But always has God tried to contact His children, and in many different ways. And when it was recognized, the Christians called it ‘anointing of God.’ It happens in other cultures, in other religions, and it goes by different names. So, yes, it has always gone on. They just have a different name and now it has become stronger. There are more—and more sustained—attempts. It is true that if you seek, you will find, and now it is even stronger. If you seek, at any level, in any religion, we respond. Many times in the past humans did not recognize the answer—they overlooked it or called it coincidence or totally missed it. But there has been a strong effort to get humans to become conscious and recognize what is happening to them. It is an awakening. People need to look around them, for it is wide-ranging and unfolding everywhere.”



The following day, Roland and Vincent walked along the beach. It was a beautiful day and no one else was around on this

secluded peninsula in the Florida panhandle. They were both inspired by the solitude and beauty of the surroundings. When they had arrived the night before, Roland knew right away that this was not the house he had seen in his vision. He was puzzled about that, especially because his vision of the bridge had been so accurate. Then, as they walked along, Roland stopped and stared at one of the houses down along the beach from Vincent's. That was it! That was the house he had sketched and faxed to Vincent! Excited, he pulled out his camera and photographed the house from all angles so he could show his friends back in Utah. Maybe they wouldn't think he was crazy after all.

At least not for this reason.



That evening they invited some of Vincent's neighbors over to watch the sunset. It was a breathtaking scene, in part because Cape San Blas faced due west so the sun always set directly into the water, and in part because there were no clouds on the horizon to obscure the view. As a result, the sun became a glowing orange ball the closer it got to the water. When it hit the horizon, it appeared to flatten out on the bottom and grew in brilliance. The clouds overhead also began their transformation into color canvases. The show continued for the better part of an hour. At the end, the group all stood up and gave God a standing ovation for the magnificent spectacle.

All the while Roland was holding forth, giving a discourse on the spiritual path he had embraced. Vincent chuckled, knowing that these particular people were not overly interested. Yet, Roland worked his magic and, before they left, he managed to give them one of Vincent's spare Urantia Books for their review. For months afterward they would come over when Vincent was at the beach and talk about the fun they'd had talking to Roland. They never mentioned the book, and Vincent suspected that it didn't hold them the way Roland had. This was further confirmation that what the teachers had said was true—the message can only be spread one person at a time and then only after listening

to that person's needs and reaching out to them. An easy concept. A difficult task.

But Roland didn't seem to have much trouble with it.

The more Vincent witnessed such interchanges between people, the more convinced he became that the teachers were absolutely correct in their assessment of their roles in this upliftment. They played but a minor part, catalysts more than anything else. The teachers reminded those who would listen that the true guide was within, and that the fragment of God residing in each person was the most reliable source of light.

The teachers also encouraged their students to seek for truth in all that they encountered. Vincent found himself becoming more open to other paths and people. The Urantia Book offered him a sturdy foundation, but other literature also provided valuable perspectives. One of his favorite sources of such information were the parables of various cultures. He especially liked those from other religious traditions, and would often read them to Riley and Katie while on the trampoline for their Sunday service. The parables could be interpreted in many ways, and Vincent encouraged the kids to try to understand the point of each one. They were often challenged by the parables, but once they agreed on the message, they were more apt to remember it, which would have been unlikely had Vincent just *told* them the point of the parable.

After observing the doings of the people he and Roland encountered, Vincent decided that, indeed, true teachers taught with their actions, attitude and service. He didn't see how anyone with

a “holier-than-thou” perspective could make a good impression on those they were trying to teach.

He tried out a parable on Roland to see what he thought of it.

“A great rabbi spent years in solitude meditating on the mystery of the divine in all things. When he finally returned to live in regular society his eyes shone with the beauty of what he had discovered. Many seekers came to him to ask for his truth, yet he was always reluctant to answer them, to put it into words. Pressed for years, he finally relented and with eloquent words gave a feeble approximation of what he had discovered.

“The seekers took these words with them everywhere. They spoke them, wrote them, created sacred texts about them, and religious societies were formed by those who revered them, until no one remembered that the words were really about an experience. As his words spread, the rabbi became disheartened. ‘I had hoped to help but perhaps I should not have spoken at all.’”

Roland laughed and agreed that it was a good parable. The two friends talked about the difficulty of stemming their own enthusiasm, so as not to be overbearing. They agreed that the message is better transmitted by gentle osmosis. While Vincent liked the idea of changing the world, Roland was more realistic and offered Vincent a parable of his own.

“Once there was an old man looking back on his life. He sat with his friends in the tea shop telling his story: ‘When I was young I was fiery—I wanted to awaken everyone. I prayed to God to give me the strength to change the world. In mid-life I awoke one day and realized my life was half over and I had changed no one, so I prayed to God to give me the strength to change those close around me who so much needed it. Alas, now I am old and my prayer is simpler: God, I ask, please give me the strength at least to change *myself*.’”

Vincent laughed heartily and agreed that Roland’s parable had hit upon the most difficult aspect of the spiritual path—changing yourself. So that night, with the surf crashing outside their windows and the stars of the Milky Way blinking by the thousands, the two friends turned in for the night, thankful for another wonderful day. And they each thanked God for their time together during this brief trip.

When it was time for Roland to fly back to Utah, Vincent dropped him off at the airport. He felt strongly that there would come a time when the two of them would again be on the road together.

He looked forward to such a time.

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Vincent reflected on the strange events that had occurred since he first met Ray and offered to represent him in his quest to become a rock-and-roll star. He then went on to reflect on earlier periods of his life, recalling some out-of-the-ordinary happenings that he had formerly chalked up to coincidence or chance. Maybe they were, but he was becoming more and more convinced that there were times in his life when he had experienced something supernatural.

One such incident had occurred when he was in high school. Vincent told the story to his children on the trampoline one Sunday.

“My friends and I were driving to a swimming hole in Colorado called The Chutes, in Eight Mile Canyon, along a winding dirt road with a series of blind curves that ran alongside the stream flowing into the canyon. I was riding in the back seat and my two friends were in the front. None of us were wearing seat belts and we were drinking beer and going too fast. We had been driving like that for about half an hour and hadn’t seen many other vehicles on the road. Suddenly, as we approached a blind curve to the right, I unexpectedly shouted for the driver to slow down. It was such a surprise to my friend that he slammed on the brakes. Around the curve, in our lane, there suddenly appeared a pickup truck speeding toward us. As it was, it narrowly missed hitting us head-on. If I hadn’t ordered the driver to slow down, we would

certainly have been seriously injured. As soon as the incident was over we stopped the car, got out and talked about the near collision. I couldn't account for why I had shouted the warning. I had just felt the urge to do so. We were all struck by the odd set of circumstances that helped us avoid a serious accident.

"It seems that people today are becoming more aware of the spiritual connectedness of events in their lives. It is almost as if they are no longer satisfied that their lives are solely governed by the laws of the material world. Too many people can recount times in their lives when they were at a crossroad and something happened that resulted in a choice that materially changed their lives. People are no longer afraid to describe these events and those involving angelic assistance. This popular interest in the spiritual is not tied to denominational church doctrine but is more personal in nature. People are more open to the concept that they have a personal connection with God that doesn't require priests or a middleman. They are confident that they are personally loved by God, and that they can speak to God and God's helpers on their own.

"I feel that this is all part and parcel of the Correcting Time—the perception of a personal relationship with God and the connectedness of each person with the other as children of God. That it is happening in so many different venues at one time tends to confirm that it's a worldwide phenomenon and is for everyone. People will be reached in the most effective way possible, but the methods of connecting will be as varied as the people on the planet."

"Dad?" Katie asked.

"Yes, dear," answered Vincent.

"Are you done yet?"

Vincent laughed. "Yeah. That's it."



Machiventa called another meeting of the teachers. His regular meetings were used to communicate the current lesson topic for the students, but they also helped suggest the attitude the teachers needed in their classrooms. Patience and understand-

ing were emphasized. It was difficult to remain centered if you believed that the students were going to consistently work on the changes that were requested. They weren't. So the teachers needed the pep talks Machiventa so often gave to them. Today was no different.

"I hope each of you is enjoying your assignment. We appreciate the effort you are all expending in the ongoing mission to accelerate this planet into the ages of Light and Life. It isn't easy, but it was never promised to be. This world is more needy than we anticipated. Even with the extensive training you had prior to arriving here, I'm sure that the situation here is worse than you could have imagined. But, then again, if it was easy, it wouldn't be nearly the opportunity we have been offered.

"Today I want to speak to you about the circuits we intend to reactivate. They consist not only of the communication lines that link this planet to the universe administration but also, and more importantly for the Teaching Mission, the circuits of love between people. The love circuits are what connect one person to another. They cannot be imposed from above but must, instead, be installed by the people themselves as they walk through life.

"That is why we continually encourage our students to be a conduit for God's love. By making that effort, they are assisting in the construction of the lines of love that will be necessary to provide a framework for those people to support and love one another in the highest sense. When the circuits connect people through the heart, then will we be on the path to a world where people work cooperatively toward a better existence for all. Everyone will be looking out for the greater common good. That will be a glorious day, but to achieve that goal, we must encourage each person who will lend an ear to make the effort on a one-to-one basis. It is only in that fashion that such an effort will be effective.

"Any questions?"

One of the teachers stood up and mentioned that he was having trouble with the impatience of his students. The continuing message of passing love on, one person at a time, wasn't being accepted. The students wanted big things to happen quickly. They were skeptical of the practicality of the one-to-one program. Many felt that it was too idealistic and that it would not work in real life.

Machiventa stroked his beard and said that he had received many reports expressing the same sentiment. Then he smiled and offered to teach the next lesson for that teacher, to see if he could shed some light on the subject.



Machiventa did, indeed, give the lecture—to the surprise and delight of the students.

“Certain teachers in this group have repeatedly expressed the view that changing the world one person at a time is unachievable within any time frame conceivable by humans.

“While I am personally *affronted* by this expression of doubt, I am not personally *offended* by it. In fact, as you might guess, I welcome it as an opportunity to teach, for there is a lesson to be gained here. You humans forget that this one-person-at-a-time restriction works on both sides of the equation. It affects our efforts to carry on this ministry—it is a two-way street.

“Each of you can thank me later, as I am sure you shall, for here is the gift of my lesson to you: You are not personally responsible for the success or failure of this ministry. Neither are we teachers personally responsible for any failure. Nor shall any of us be covered in glory for its successes, however modest or extravagant. All of us—both sides—are in the same boat. Our obligation is limited to serving the Father as we honestly divine His will to work through each event in life.

“Do not trouble yourselves as to whether the Universal Father’s plan will ultimately succeed, or whether its completion meets your personal assessment of timeliness. If you can do this, if you can accept the Father’s pace, then we have some assignments for which you would qualify as candidates. If you can make God’s business your business, then we have challenging opportunities in store for you.

“Do not presume to measure God’s progress; look rather to your own house. You fail to realize, because of your physical condition, what we know: *You* are the ministry. You are called upon in service to God and mankind. We are doing little. We expect you to do nearly everything.

"We have only begun, and things are going well—look at the frankness and honesty of the exchanges we have developed at this shallow point.

"Now go and make mistakes in His service."



After Roland went back to Utah, Vincent returned to his normal routine. He prayed for a way to free up his time so he could be more active in the mission. He knew he'd have to undergo plenty of personal transformations before he'd be ready for any public ministry, and hoped his daily pressures and material concerns would not sway him from his desired goals. What he didn't understand was that everything that happened to him, no matter how seemingly mundane, was being used to hone his abilities and his judgment.

This mission was not one that required a monastic life sheltered from the masses. It was an endeavor which required participation in everyday life, for, indeed, that was where the people who were in need of the message were to be found. It was part of the mission to restate the basic teachings of the teachers in the actions of their pupils so that the substance of the messages would be readily observable and believable. And the pupils could only achieve this by continuing to live their lives as they had before they became involved—at least outwardly. Their surroundings were the same but they themselves were different. Now they were attempting to be conduits of God's love and, by being such conduits, they were agents of change.

And change was what this mission was all about—change for the better.



That week Will spoke on the subject of breaking with routine even while living a routine life.

"Do not spend your time sleepwalking. Do not be disorganized. Each of you knows that you have limited resources. You should marshal those resources. Bring your skills and your spiritual forces to bear for greater productivity.

"I am speaking, of course, about your relationships with other people—your encounters, chance meetings, routine meetings. The greatest difficulty for all of you in fully carrying out this exercise is to avoid habitual patterns of thought, no matter how self-assuring, particularly with those you deal with on a regular basis. Approach this work in a lighthearted way. Practice on strangers—they will like it. Then take those lessons that you have practiced and gained experience with, and apply them to break the routines which ego sets up for you in your daily life."

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Vincent forwarded a lesson he liked to the Internet group:

From: Vincent
To: Teaching Mission List
Subject: Will & Co. Lesson

Greetings to you all!

I've spent the day breathing in the beauty surrounding me here in Florida. It may be winter where you are, but here we are in shorts and T-shirts. Not to rub it in, but the weather is beautiful here in November. I thought the following transcript from Will might be of interest to you.

Hope you enjoy! Cheers!

"The love of God surrounds us. The love of God enfolds us. The love of God supports us. Wherever we gather, He is.

"Good evening once again. Thank you for inviting me into your midst. I am your teacher, Will, who loves you.

"For centuries the traditional Christian churches have taught the recipe of faith, hope and charity as the path of salvation for people's souls. Over this short course of lessons I have taught you that you should modify your concept of faith to the belief in the fragment of the Father that lives within each of us. I have also taught you that a fatalistic hope encourages inaction and is not the

kind of hope to be fostered. I speak rather of a forthright brand of courage that enables you to act upon your discernment of the will of the heavenly Father, and applying that knowledge and faith to each choice that the circumstances of your life provide.

"Only your example as doers of the Father's will can motivate people and nations to change for the better. You cannot cajole or shame or lobby people into progressive upliftment of the spirit. They will be led only by your example and the consequences of your actions. Even on those rare occasions where your personal interaction with another is of spirit teaching value, the effects are fleeting; only repeated cumulative exposure is likely to bear fruit. Each of you has an individual duty to conduct yourselves at all times as if God was standing by your side, demonstrating by your every thought, word and deed your appreciation of the meaning and value of His teachings. You must do so in a way that allows the love of the heavenly Father to flow through you unhindered, directly to the person with whom you are engaged. And, lastly, do not discount your function in the scheme of heavenly progress by making fun of such possibilities.

"So we have thus far taught faith but of an active kind, and courage rather than passive hope, which together make for a potent combination. When you turn on your television at any hour you can see what happens when faith and courage are untempered by wisdom, in the acts of the soliciting preachers who are much like the Pharisees of old, promising spirit in exchange for money, promising spirit in exchange for the abolition of human will, promising spirit in exchange for subservience to a book and the printed word it contains, promising spirit in exchange for commitment to some outside guru who claims to discern the word of God better than you.

"That is not our teaching.

"We suggest that you temper the heavy combination of faith and courage with the simple and frank humility shown by the great teachers of your planet, those who went among the people and did not devote themselves to a life of rarified thought in a monastic setting but who walked with the common folk sharing their personal vision of the joy and liberty of living life in the Father's love. We teach you that humility is necessary to proper

progress. You can learn and exercise it now, or you can learn and exercise it later. Either way you are going to learn it. It is inescapable. We think you will enjoy this life much more if you practice it now.

“There is no human so perfect that the heavenly Father calls His work complete. He loves us all and sees value in each of us. He recognizes that due to unequal circumstances and the potential for error that comes with free will, not all receive a fair start, much less a fair share. Many times we, your teachers, have listened as you joked amongst yourselves about the differences between people. At such times you have often received an insight—an inner glimpse—of how these distinctions, which seem so keen to you, must look from a cosmic perspective.

“I think we can safely say that there has never been and never will be a person born on your planet who doesn’t need to know humility. Humility finds expression in many things. You practice humility when you appreciate the air you breathe, the fuel you burn as you speed back and forth, the food you eat, the companions whose presence you enjoy, however briefly. It is humbling to appreciate that God loves you and your fellows. It is showing humility to give someone a gift, or to share your belongings with those in need, realizing in the moment of doing so that it is of little consequence and probably changes little except you. For our teacher said, ‘He who does this for the least of my brethren, does it for me.’

“In your society it is too easy to live your life without ever slowing down to appreciate your blessings. Many people, due to innate intelligence or the recognition of God’s leading, realize that such a way of living is inappropriate. A God-knowing person cannot exist and, certainly, cannot act without showing humility.

“Service is asked, not charity. Service opportunities will show themselves to you. You do not need to get on a boat or a plane and travel to a particular place. Opportunities are all around where you are right now, sometimes inside your own house. You need not concern yourselves with the worthiness of the recipient or the worthiness of your effort. I only counsel you not to waste valuable time on those capable of serving themselves. Service cannot be genuine without humility, for you do these things not in your

own name but in the name of one greater, thereby demonstrating your love and respect and your understanding of His will.

“That is all I have to say.”



At the next meeting Vincent reported on an opportunity he'd had and the results of his attempt to impart some of the teachings.

“A client and I had to go out of town. I told him of my new-found interest in things spiritual. When he asked how it had come about, I went into my story of how I found the Urantia Book and the effect it had on me. The man, who was a very strong believer in the Bible, offered to read the Urantia Book if I would read the Bible. Having been raised a Catholic I had not read the Bible much, so I readily agreed. When we returned home, I gave him a Urantia Book and he gave me a Bible.

“After several weeks, I had finished the Bible and called my client to see if he wanted to get together to discuss what each had learned. He agreed. When I arrived at his house at the appointed time, the man's wife as well as another man I knew were already present. After we exchanged pleasantries, we began to discuss the books. It soon became obvious that none of them had read much of the Urantia Book, but they had read enough to know that it wasn't of God, or so they said.

“I asked them, ‘What makes you say that?’

“The answer was somewhat convoluted, but it revolved around the belief that the Bible was the only revealed truth and that there would never be any other. Ergo, the Urantia Book must be the work of Satan. I was hurt that my client hadn't read the book as promised and he and his wife believed that I would embrace a work of the devil. But I learned a valuable lesson about how to present the concepts of the Urantia Book, or of the teachers, with the least amount of objection. It would have to be boiled down to the most basic message and would have to be free of language that would create barriers.”

After a short discussion, the group decided to address the following question to Will. “We have been talking about saying to

someone, 'I'm praying for you' and the different reactions we have received. Can you tell us how to relate to someone we care about and how to show our concern about what is happening to them?"

Will responded, "Most people run afoul in their relationships with others when they adopt a formulaic approach and standard vocabulary and apply it to all persons without regard for the individuality of each person.

"Plain language usually works best.

"Many are offended when well-meaning religionists adopt a pious vocabulary and a sanctimonious tone when reaching out to comfort someone, giving the impression that somehow they possess holy knowledge others don't, that they are capable of imparting special spiritual favors. This creates a barrier. If it is sufficient to say that you care for another person, what profit is there in aggravating them and invoking their deep-seated prejudices by portraying your concern for them in religious terms? Your responsibility to yourselves and your demonstration of the Father's love is fully discharged by the simplest and most efficient expression of humanity and loving concern.

"Plain speech is best."

Vincent was down on the bridge talking aloud to God, as was his habit. Muttley, his dog, was chasing shadows and splashing in the water under the bridge. Vincent raised his hands to the starry sky and began his discourse.

“God, here I am again. My day was okay, but I can’t say that I did anything dramatic to further your message. I did smile at those I met and even held open a door or two. I tried to stop once or twice between the incoming telephone calls to look out the window and think about the people who walked by.”

He began pacing back and forth over the bridge.

“You know, God, when I first started walking on the spiritual path, I was enthusiastic. I was ready to quit my job and accost people wherever I went to tell them about the exciting news of your plan. But your teachers advised against that and recommended patience in all things. They seemed to be off base, although I never told them so. I figured that they just didn’t understand the pace of human life, how we like immediate results and how we hate to wait.

“It has now been several years since I met Ray and found the Urantia Book. I have been involved in celestial instruction for a while as well. And you know what? I’m starting to see the wisdom in what the teachers taught. It’s not about the immediate or the dramatic, is it? It is about the everyday and how we deal with each person we encounter. It is about balancing our own lives and

reducing our fear, anger, impatience and self-importance. It is about setting an example. It is about what we stand for. It is about the faith we must exhibit when things don't appear to be going our way. It is a very subtle thing, isn't it? Yet, I can attest that the results over time are discernable and the transformations do occur to us when we spend time with you in the stillness."

There was no one around to hear him, so he spoke with feeling, often waving his arms when he thought that it would help to accentuate a point. He stopped for a moment, then stroked his beard and continued:

"I still have my doubts that our actions can indeed change the world, but I have now reached the stage where I will leave that to you, God, and I will just do my part. I assume you know what you are doing, although I have to tell you that this planet appears to be one screwed-up mess. I hope you are really working on fixing it as we have been told. I know that you have a multitude of assistants hovering around us here and I pray that they can help us all out.

"In conclusion, God, I do desire to better understand what you want for my life, so I ask that you help me see it. After I understand your will, I would also request that you help me have the strength to make the effort to actually *do* what it takes to implement it. I promise you that I will do my part and spend time with you each day discussing my journey. I know that you are there to listen whenever I take the time to be with you. Help me to have patience and tolerance. I am a willing worker in your army and I will do my best to spread light as I pass by."

With that, Vincent found himself a place on the bridge, lay down and looked up at the stars. The moon was rising on his left and a few wispy clouds were slowly moving across the sky. He closed his eyes and attempted to clear his mind so he could enter the stillness. And he managed to do so, at least for a moment or two. Then the Mutt nuzzled him. Vincent laughed. He leaned over and rubbed her stomach. "Okay, time to go," he said. He stood up, climbed on his bike, and with Muttley running beside him they headed for home.



At the end of the Little League baseball season an award ceremony and dinner were staged. Vincent was asked to give a short speech as he awarded the trophies for the various categories.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We are here tonight to celebrate together. When we started this season, our boys and girls were young and in need of experience. We have provided them a chance to learn and grow, and each of them has done that. We have tried to convey to them how baseball is like life. It has its ups and downs. You win some, you lose some. You can be the hero one second and the goat the next.

"We tried to teach them to shake off the past and concentrate on the present. You just can't be concerned with what you did in your last at bat if you want to be successful in your next one. You must take the wins and losses with a grain of salt, learning what each has to offer. You can't win every time, but you can be a good sport in every instance, and we hope our young ballplayers were able to understand and practice some of that.

"Our coaches were really trying to be good role models. We are proud of the jobs they did and hope you are too. We give you your boys and girls, but they are not the same as when you placed them in our care. They are transformed. So let's give them all a hand and let's ask them to set an example next year for the rookies who will enter this league."



That night on the bridge Vincent reflected on the impact one person can have on those he encounters. He thought about *To Sir, With Love*, a movie he'd seen where a man quit his high-paying job to become a teacher in a troubled high school. He was treated poorly by the students. He had to earn their respect, to show them that he cared. He worked hard and believed in them. He made a difference. He impacted the kids. They chose to take a different, more positive path because he had been there for them.

Vincent raised his hands to the sky and asked to be able to do the same, all the while knowing that it was up to him. He was capable and so was everyone else. It was the example that he would set by his actions, by who he was. He would make a difference, he

vowed, and as he did so, a surge of emotion swept over him and he wept. Wept! He didn't cry much—not really at all, not since he'd had his last dog put to sleep. But now he cried tears of joy. He wasn't ashamed, but invigorated.

As the celestial personalities looked down on the bridge that night, they too wept for joy. They had been blessed with the opportunity to impact this person and many others, and they were thankful. This mission was so important, yet so personal. To be permitted to contact mortals and to actually be able to see them change because of that contact was something they would always remember.

Yes, they too cried. But they were encouraged. Witnessing the dialogue between Vincent and God increased their dedication to the work at hand. Even celestials need encouragement from time to time, and they got it at the bridge that night.



The group loved getting together and sharing their experiences. Their meetings had become very family-like; they hugged one another when they arrived and when they left. Each person was sensitive to the others and all were given a chance to speak their minds. There was plenty of lighthearted banter, and they often joked among themselves about the seeming absurdity of being taught by invisible celestial beings. But, strange as it seemed, the students kept coming back.

One night, Will had a short lesson for the group: "What can we look for in this life to indicate our progress? You should approach your challenges the way a rock climber approaches a steep rock face. The rock climber doesn't have time to think about how glorious it will be at the top. He must get there first. And getting there is what being a rock climber is all about. It is not possible to skip over any of the steps, neither the easy ones nor the hard ones. It is not possible to think your way up or to have your way drawn up with good intentions, or to clamber up through the use of outside devices.

"You must climb the rock face yourself and it is a matter of small things—tiny toeholds, rock ledges, fingerholds and cracks,

some of them perilously unstable—yet they will all be traversed in time. The ascent is a slow and difficult process requiring great fortitude, great opportunism, planning and courage. The reward makes it all worthwhile. Skilled climbers can do the apparently impossible and make it look easy, but there is nothing speedy about the process—nothing flashy about any of the moves.

“It is the same story as always—step by step, opportunity to opportunity. No rock face, no matter how sheer, is a total blank. They can all be scaled. Each of you here tonight represents a life with varying degrees of difficulty. No matter how much difficulty is imposed, it is still necessary to scale to the height. Each of you is on your own. We believe each of you has the basic tools and the range of skills necessary, and your technique will improve. And then it will become easier. But you need not hurry, and in order to gauge your progress you must look back. You will be surprised at how far you have come, inching along, one toehold, one fingerhold at a time, taking advantage of each opportunity to advance as it presented itself to you.

“We are not offering sweeping change. We are not offering dazzling revelations. We are offering solid, laborious progress. But the result is good and the passage is not nearly as dangerous as it would be if we were attempting something foolish or whimsical. When you look back at your lives you will see what great progress we have made in only one year. This is my lesson for you tonight. This week, more challenges. Keep climbing.

“Shalom.”



Vincent was reflecting on what attracted people to activities and what did not. This was a part of his continuing prayer to know the methods which would be most effective in conveying the message of the Urantia Book: *The gospel of the kingdom is: the fact of the Fatherhood of God, coupled with the resultant truth of the sonship-brotherhood of men.* Although the Urantia Book used male-dominated terminology, Vincent used the terms to connote the oneness of humanity. He recognized the barrier that the male des-

ignation of God erected and he attempted to find neutral terms, for the message was not intended to exalt male over female but to confirm that all individuals are equal within the family of God.

Being a child of the sixties, Vincent was very interested in music. In college he had been the school's entertainment director, booking bands to play for the students, and he booked what he considered good bands—Elvis, Elton John, Crosby and Nash, the Doobie Brothers, America, the Beach Boys, Littlefeat, the James Gang, Earl Scruggs, New Riders of the Purple Sage, and Commander Cody and his Lost Planet Airmen, to name a few. On this particular day, he and Lucy were late for a concert and the parking lots were packed. He suggested they try the nearest parking lot anyway, and when Lucy doubted that it would be possible to find a spot there, Vincent replied calmly, "Have faith, Lucy. The parking angels will arrange for us to get a space."

This "parking angel" concept started out as a joke, but by this time Vincent really believed in it. He developed this belief when he repeatedly found a parking place after asking the angels to line one up for him. He would often tell his children when they went into a busy mall parking lot or restaurant that the parking angels would get them a choice location if they asked. He explained that it was just one of the perks of being a spirit-led individual who was in tune with the universe. The children were skeptical but always impressed when they would drive up to a great parking space and watch someone pull out right in front of them opening up a spot. And whenever they momentarily lost faith in the angels and parked far away to be sure of getting a space, they invariably walked up to see someone just leaving, providing someone else the spot that was really meant for them. On those occasions Vincent would tell the kids, "See? We just didn't have faith!"

So, when Vincent and Lucy pulled into the main lot for the concert, it happened that there was just one space available. After they parked and as they were getting out of the car, some people walked by and said, "Boy, are you lucky! Two people got in their car and left right before you arrived. We had to park five blocks away!"

Vincent smiled and told them that he had a parking angel who never failed to get him a place to park. They all had a good laugh then headed toward the arena.



The teachers consistently discussed love, although they complained that the word was not descriptive enough.

"The heart connection allows the Father's light to enter your space and opens you to the possibilities of the universe. If you can see and feel these connections throughout your day, you will more easily become a conduit for the Father's love. When the connection is open, the light flows through you and reflects on those near you. This loving energy can also affect those passing by, that they too may have their circuits opened, that the light will also pass through them.

"So you see, the heart connections and an openness to the beauty and grandeur that are God's represent the first steps towards becoming a conduit. When you can consciously leave that circuit open throughout the day, you will always be walking in the light.

"This is our goal for you: to be like the Father, to discern the Father in all things, to continue on your path wherever it may lead, always with the faith that opportunities will arise to allow you another chance to evidence the Father's will to those you meet.

"This light is being connected to more and more people every day—in every walk, in every path, on every journey. Look around you. The diversity of people who are touched by the light should encourage you, should excite you, should reinforce your understanding and belief in what is occurring. This light is not just for you or those with the knowledge that you have, or those on the path you have selected. No, each person is approached from where they stand. Each person is presented the truth, but from their perspective, and in a helping that they can digest.

This process is one step at a time, but the first step must be from where you start. After that the journey begins. A path is chosen and rechosen. Intolerance on your part is unacceptable. It is not for you to say if another person is on the right path or not. Everyone has their own path. Your job is to find the heart connections to the Father, to fill yourselves with light and love and to pass it on, all the while exhibiting faith and no fear. If you can do that,

then we will have succeeded and this world will be one step closer to a world of Light and Life."



Vincent and Lucy were attending a Jimmy Buffett concert, and all the "Parrotheads" were gathered to see their favorite good-time balladeer. During the show, Vincent looked around at the audience and noticed how happy they all seemed. He thought about what it was that drew all these people to the show. The attraction, he decided, was that Jimmy Buffett was all about celebrating good times.

Vincent discussed this with the group at the next meeting. "Now the common man generally perceives that the spiritual or religious path is burdensome and lacking in fun. This perception has been fueled for centuries by fire-and-brimstone sermons and the concept that God requires an existence devoid of joyful exuberance. As a result many people have drifted away from churches and have shied away from conscious contemplation of God or of talking to God. To them it does not seem like a pleasant or enjoyable pursuit. But as I looked out over the crowd at the concert, what I saw were good people who enjoyed having a good time. More importantly, I realized that having fun was not inconsistent with doing the Father's will. There is no reason why the faith path to the Father should not be an exciting and joyous adventure."

The group had always been somewhat irreverent, loving to laugh among themselves and at themselves and their celestial teachers. On this night they all agreed that a lighthearted approach to life did wonders not only for the people encountered, but also for each person who adopted such an attitude. They also kidded around about the teachers and wondered if they would hear from Machiventa that night. One of the members called a session with Machiventa a "Big Mac Attack," a reference to a popular hamburger commercial. They all laughed, some wondering out loud if they should distance themselves from the one who suggested such a moniker "in case you are hit by lightning." In truth, the group, by such interactions, showed the lightness of attitude that

the teachers always recommended. That night Will commented on the topic.

"Some of you have busy schedules, especially those of you who have young children. It is harder for you, and we understand that, but if you allow yourselves to be open to the Father's leading, you will be in His presence throughout the day. Be willing to work for God at any given moment. Work for the Father with great joy in your heart, for coming into the Kingdom is a joyful experience. Working for the Father can be fun because the rewards are so great. You have already discovered, even here within your group, the laughter that is so nurturing to your souls. You need this. Your world has become far too serious a place with all its problems, and as you gather here together once a week, your laughter is a very necessary antidote. I invite you to continue having fun together and not to feel overly concerned about being irreverent, or hurting our feelings or offending us. When you say in jest that you are having a "Big Mac Attack," Machiventa Melchizedek is amused. He fully understands your need for frivolity, and we all laugh along with you.

"Upon that note, we will close for tonight. Go forth as cheerful and optimistic emissaries. Carry your message to the world. Remember the Father goes with you and I love you.

"Take each day as it comes and do the best you can. That is all anyone can ask of you. Anywhere there is joy to be spread, spread it. Anywhere there is love to be sown, sow it. If you can lift the burden of your brethren, lift it and demonstrate the Father's love. If you only knew how it makes the Father feel when He sees the good works that are being done in His name!

"There is love and He knows it."

The first national gathering of the Teaching Mission was scheduled to take place in Cheney, Washington, from July 14 to July 17, 1994. Vincent called Roland to make sure he still intended to go. Roland, as usual, was unsure about his plans for next week, much less next month. But, because Roland was blessed with a flexible job—that of managing his rental real estate—Vincent was sure he would be able to find some time to get away. It's funny, thought Vincent, how most of us aspire to the kind of independence Roland enjoys, yet he has other time-consuming matters that encroach on that freedom. It was apparent that it doesn't matter so much what you are doing, you are going to have obstacles to overcome. Vincent accepted that the teachers and the Urantia Book were correct when they told us that this life was about solving problems and having faith that everything would work out for the best. When you are in the middle of a crisis, that may not seem true, thought Vincent, but when you look back, you will see how those adversities strengthened you—if they didn't kill you!



Vincent enjoyed the group experience, but he also wanted to ask a few private questions of the teachers. To this end he contacted Eric to schedule a session for himself alone. After it was con-

firmed for one week hence, Vincent began working on his questions, writing them down so he would be able to remember them.

On the day of his session, Vincent went over to Eric's house with his questions for Will. They were general questions he had wondered about for some time, as well as some lawyer-type questions. He wanted to put Will to the test. He arrived early and had a cup of tea with Eric, then settled down in the den where Eric closed his eyes and attempted to connect with Will.

Vincent alternated between being sorry he wasn't able to clearly hear the teachers himself and being relieved that he didn't have that burden. Those who were able to communicate with the teachers were always concerned that they might misunderstand or taint the message with their own ideas, or worse, be held accountable for the lessons. Vincent saw the stress this responsibility put on some transmitters and he appreciated Eric's willingness to be of service to him. Soon the connection was made.

WILL: Greetings this fine morning! I am advised that you have some questions you wish to ask in a private meeting.

VINCENT: Yes, Will. *Thank you for granting my request. Without further ado, I would like to begin.*

WILL: Very well. Proceed.

VINCENT: *It has been rumored that when the Urantia Book was delivered it came with mandates indicating that the book was a thousand years ahead of its time and that its distribution should be undertaken only in a quiet, personal fashion. Some are concerned that your teachings appear to encourage a more active ministry. What do you say to those people?*

WILL: When the revelations in the Urantia Book were first given there was much concern that they would be suppressed and lost to your world. Many years have since passed and the time is nearing when the teachings will no longer be so far advanced for the thinking person. Change and upheaval is coming to your world. Our mission is to help advance the world spiritually and, under the guidance of Machiventa Melchizedek, to bring it to a level where it will accept our teachings as well as a new teacher. Our teachings, which are based on the Urantia Book, are preliminary to the sending and receiving of a Magisterial Son, a

celestial teacher who on normal worlds helps to educate the inhabitants in preparation for the ages of Light and Life. After he arrives, he will teach on this world for a thousand years or more. With all this work we are merely laying the foundation. Neither the Urantia Book nor our teaching is an end in itself. They are only tools to help you on your journey into the future.

Your personal ministry is to continue according to your own inner light, and I cannot dictate how you should proselytize these teachings. This is a personal matter. However, I will say that the incubation period is now past and the future looms on the horizon. It is our mission to bring this world into a general acceptance of the knowledge and teachings contained in this book, and beyond, and we shall not not fail.

VINCENT: *My wife has not yet been drawn to the book or to your teachings. What can I do to remove any obstacles standing in the way of her enlightenment?*

WILL: All depends on freewill choice. Many will come to our teachings through you and many won't. It is not your responsibility to attempt to force anyone to believe what we teach. All people must decide for themselves and, indeed, there are many paths to the Father. This is but one such path.

Having said this, I can say that the best way to influence another is by who you are, by how you have been affected and transformed by these teachings. How are you able to be a clear conduit for the Father's love? How do you desire to deliver selfless service to all you encounter? When others see you in action, you will be a persuasive teacher without ever mentioning the Urantia Book or our teachings. If you can show that you are successful in transforming yourself, others may be inspired to ask you what caused such a change. And with such an opening, you will then be able to speak frankly, and they will be ready to hear. Next question!

VINCENT: *Do the teachers ever make mistakes?*

WILL: Yes, we do. We are not God nor do we have the all-powerful wisdom of those ahead of us in the scale of progression. We are far in advance of your level, however, and can, for the most part, carry out our charge which is to teach you higher spiritual truths.

VINCENT: *What percentage of people on this planet make it to the next stage after death? If it is a very small percentage, then why shouldn't we just forget it and go on with mindless hedonism?*

WILL: Most individuals are resurrected on the mansion worlds. There are several things you need to understand. First, only personalities who knowingly reject the ascension plan face extinction. There are very few here who understand the plan, much less who would reject it if they understood it. Secondly, all doubts are resolved in favor of allowing the individual to continue the ascension progression. Third, as children of the Father, mercy and forgiveness are showered down upon each of you.

One of the problems of this world today is the presumptuous opinion of many that they know the *only* path to the Father, that failure to follow *their* path will lead to damnation. It is better to avoid such judgmental assertions, which are mean-spirited and fear-based, and unlikely to convert anyone to anyone else's beliefs.

This is an important lesson for you as well because you believe that you have a better understanding of the cosmic scheme of things than most—and you do. But if you really understand what we have been teaching you, you will exhibit tolerance, not judgmental condemnations. You should be looking for the best in another's beliefs so that you can emphasize and highlight those aspects. We are not here to create barriers between people. There are enough barriers in existence to effectively keep people from sharing the Father's love with each other. We seek to build bridges between people so that the love can be transmitted between you and everyone you meet.

This is the long answer to your question. Seek the Father and don't worry about not making it to the mansion worlds. But I will tell you this: Because you have been taught the higher truths, more will be expected from you and your associates.

VINCENT: *Good news, bad news, eh? Okay, back to the questions. During the battle of the Lucifer rebellion, was there physical combat? How do celestials engage in battle?*

WILL: There was never a "physical" battle, only a battle for souls—an intellectual and spiritual war, far more perilous and deadly than material combat.

VINCENT: *After the Lucifer rebellion, circuits were blocked, and spiritual circuits and universe broadcasts were cut off to the rebellious centers. Does censoring the ideas of the rebels in effect shackle free will by not permitting both sides of an issue to be presented to those making the decision about their eternal welfare?*

WILL: You have misunderstood that section of the Urantia Book. Both sides were presented to each and every will creature involved, and each was permitted to come to a complete decision on his own.

VINCENT: *Is there presently an active superhuman force on this planet encouraging its citizens to select evil rather than good?*

WILL: No.

VINCENT: *What can you say about terrorists and others who willingly kill innocent people to further their causes?*

WILL: The perpetrators of such acts and their supporters live in an atmosphere devoid of normal human social conditions. They have been harmed by the experiences of life, are spiritually maimed, and rather than seek solace they seek power through association with other defective personalities who train and manipulate them into wreaking havoc on unsuspecting victims. In your language these organizations are known as “cells”—an apt description, for these cells are scattered throughout all the societies on your planet and can be analogized to cancer cells. A healthy animal body, like a healthy society, is normally capable of surrounding these cells and isolating them so that they do no harm. But these criminal cells are growing in numbers, and there is a real possibility that their acts will occur with increasing frequency as more and more people become alienated from society.

These killers lack the wherewithal to divine anything positive from these negative experiences. By isolating themselves, their chances of making spiritual progress are substantially diminished. No humans thrive in isolation, yet it remains our duty, just as it remains your duty, to steadfastly advance the message of the Father’s love and the Master’s message of brotherly love through selfless service. We ask that you remain open to the possibility that these people will turn their lives around. Any more questions?

VINCENT: *That is about all I have at this time, Will, but do you have a parable I can take home to my children?*

WILL: I will be happy to give you one.

The sun shines through the trees. Their leaves may block the sun and allow its filtered presence to be known in the midst of shining. The knowledge that the sun is there resides within the observer. The truest of the sprinkled rays is the only thing observable. Sometimes life is like walking through a forest. There are rays of light and illuminated spots but the sun itself in all its brilliance is always above you.

Thank you for your questions, Vincent. I leave you now but, as always, I counsel you to spend time each day with the Father.

Shalom.

Vincent lay on his trampoline the next Sunday morning, waiting for his children to wake up and come to the trampoline service. It was spring and he watched as the squirrels ran and played with each other in the trees. A woodpecker was pecking on a metal bird house, making a lot of noise. The Mutt, after spending all day at the ball park the day before, was sleeping on the porch. The trees seemed to be stretching out to catch the early morning rays on their leaves, creating a shady backyard.

Vincent had assembled several books which he intended to use in his trampoline service—a book of angel stories, a book of parables from around the world, a book of inspirational stories called *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, another named *The Book of Virtues* and, of course, the *Urantia Book*. This time they were going to play revelation roulette, where the kids would choose a book and then select, at random, a page number. They would then open the book to that page and begin reading. It was fun for the kids and invariably provided a story that would spark a discussion.

As he waited on the trampoline, he thought about the amazing coordination of nature around him—the plants, animals and people all coexisting in relative peace. He thought of the unbelievable intelligence it took to assemble all of this. Then he reflected on the strangeness of his recent habit of conversing with celestials—unseen personalities. Most people would think he was experiencing a major delusion, but Vincent had arrived at a point in

his life where such interaction was becoming commonplace, even routine. He wondered about known figures from the past who'd had similar experiences.

For instance, what about the prophets of the Old Testament? What about Mohammed? What about the numerous people who had contributed to various texts and religious books, even the Bible? Almost everyone belonging to those faiths believed that the authors of their religious texts had been in contact with the celestial realms, that they were genuinely divinely inspired. There had been many on Earth who honestly and sincerely believed that they had been shown celestial truths and who then attempted to deliver their message. Maybe when viewed historically this phenomenon was not out of the ordinary, even if it was not part of the common man's experience. Then again, almost everyone had a story to tell about a fortuitous incident in their lives that made them wonder. Vincent concluded that celestial contact was probably more widespread than he had originally thought, that just about anyone who was open to the possibility was being worked with—but that most of the work was very subtle.

Recently, he was finding more and more books that had something to do with spirit guides or teachers. One such book, *Letters of the Scattered Brotherhood*, was originally published in 1948, but its teachings sounded a lot like the lessons his group had been receiving from the teachers.

Indeed, many people were recognizing the inner guidance available to them. It seemed to be a universal message, available to all. Because such personal revelation was subject to so many human contaminations, most seekers preferred to rely exclusively on the "Word of God" found in their traditional religious books.

Vincent thought it strange that so much intolerance, so much hatred and and so many wars were being justified by religious beliefs. Yet how could that be? Why would people accept hatred, fear and intolerance as a way to express their religious faith? He admitted that Lucy was probably correct in her theory that the "true believer" is someone who accepts the proposition that theirs is the one true path to God and that all others are in error. It doesn't take much of a jump from that belief to see all others as deceived by the devil and therefore condemned. And when an attempt to

show these so-called sinners the “true” way fails, the “true believer” has no choice but to fear them and hate them. That theory was borne out over and over again. Vincent figured that such goings-on were what turned people off to religion, including him. In fact, he enjoyed reading books about the various religious “cults,” just to shake his head at the intolerance that some of the authors let seep into their work when everything that didn’t square with their crystallized dogma was deemed a cult activity.

The possibility of continuing revelation was disconcerting to most people.

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As the days rolled on, Vincent continued going to work, raising his family, feeding the dog, and generally living his day-to-day life. He was frustrated at times at the apparently unchanged pattern of his life. After all this spiritual seeking he often wondered what good it had done. Had he really changed much? Had he done anything to assist in the upliftment of those he encountered? It sure didn't seem like it.

He was reminded of a Zen parable: *Before enlightenment: Chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment: Chop wood, carry water.* He wanted something "big" to happen, but was coming to realize that slow progress was all he could expect. He was frustrated by that thought.

Vincent wasn't the only one who felt that way. Impatience, it seemed, was shared by many in the world, especially when the mass media was daily broadcasting all of the world's problems. It was only human to want to do more than small acts of kindness. Vincent called some of his friends in Idaho and they commiserated about this problem. Not long afterwards, he received a transcript in the mail from the Idaho group. They had asked their teacher, Daniel, to give a lesson on this topic and thought Vincent would be interested in what Daniel had to say. Vincent eagerly opened the letter and read:

STUDENT: *How can we help to bring about change?*

DANIEL: Ills plague this planet. Indeed evil appears to have grown more prevalent. This is a time of correction which is to be instrumental in bringing about change.

Change happens when people are at the point where it becomes a necessity. Part of being human is the tendency to procrastinate until change must come about or destruction is imminent, whether it be in any of the physical requirements of the body—food, exercise—whether it be in a relationship, whether it be economical, political, environmental, and the list goes on.

Indeed, when one understands that the underlying cause of most evil is not necessarily a single factor but a multitude of them, then one realizes that changing one aspect will not bring about total and progressive change; there must be changes made in many areas, system-wide, so to speak. One must look to the individual and one must look to the institutions of society.

Individuals will not likely change unless there is some motivating factor that will benefit them through change. When the individual is able to consciously become aware that change is necessary, then he or she can take action to bring about change. Self-understanding is necessary in order for one to know what needs to be changed and how to go about doing so. An example is the drug addict who suddenly faces death through his addiction. At that point a choice must be made. The addict must take the steps necessary to continue with life, or die. And so the self-knowledge that there is a problem, that something needs to be done, will be the first step.

Nobody else can take this step for the addict. Self-responsibility is the key. There can be many areas of support for the individual that will make the situation easier, but ultimately the decision for change, that choice, rests on the person himself.

Society and institutions are also key. Society needs to begin to understand the value of education, of teaching principles of responsibility from the time a child is an infant. As teacher and parents, caretakers, churches and the like assume this role of truly bringing education to its peak, they will help individuals to be who they are capable of being, of reaching their potential within society. It rests on the individual to be the one who chooses, but

society must provide the various areas of support that can help bring about this change. Education is a key element.

Another vital element is the ability to rise beyond personal glorification, personal greed and personal fulfillment if there is to be any hope in bringing about overall change. Anyone who is in a relationship with others will understand this immediately. Many times parents forgo their own wishes to bring the child into better understanding. Those in education find that it is more than the children in your care whom you need to educate—often the parents need help as well. And so, those occasions where the concept of responsibility can be laid out, organized, and given full meaning to both students and parents alike will certainly help in bringing forth overall change.

In your own personal ministry, it is not necessary to teach from a pulpit or from a school podium. What is essential is that you be an example to others of what it means to be responsible, to be loving, to be tolerant, to be caring, and to generally be about the Father's business. You are not all going to be called upon to speak publicly. That is not the agenda. Each individual has their own pathway. It is through your ability to present to the world the truth of the Father's love by your loving service and your joyful and gracious presence, that you will help in the Correcting Time. Has this helped?

STUDENT: *Sort of, Daniel, but sometimes I think, gee, there really ought to be something else I can do! Am I being impatient?*

DANIEL: A prayer for any given situation will surely be answered in God's time. And, indeed, many things are happening of which you are not aware. However, being able to project a positive sense of overall knowledge of God's presence will be nourishment to those who are in the dark, those who are ready to give up, those who see no end in sight.

God is indeed upholding all universes and each individual inhabited world. And so, while the current situation may look bleak, knowledge that in time all ills will be corrected, is your strength. Conveying a sense of well-being is not necessarily being a "Pollyanna" but is showing your trust and faith in the love, goodness and the truth regarding the Creator of us all. Continue to demonstrate your own goodness that others may benefit thereby.

Spend time in prayer, meditation, and worship. These times are necessary for you to align yourself, to help you understand what your purpose is in your journey. And with all that, let go and trust.

STUDENT: *I know you are correct, Daniel, yet at times I feel that I am making no progress at all personally.*

DANIEL: My words to you are these: Of course there is progress continually being made. You cannot change overnight from an embryo into a walking, talking adult. You must go through the various stages of development. And so, too, each of you is going through the stages of spiritual development that are bringing you into greater and more meaningful awareness, offering you opportunities for further growth, enrichment and enhancement.

You see, all growth is unconscious. A great amount of learning is done unconsciously for a long period of time. The unconscious spiritual learning will, in time, go to the conscious level, at which point the individual is given the choice of whether or not to continue. And so, while this awareness appears to lie dormant, you can compare it to the infant who learns language spontaneously because of the unconscious ability to learn. In the same way, spiritual learning is taking place in many, many ways. Indeed, are all being prodded to progress to the next level.

As Vincent read this transcript, he again vowed to have patience and take things one day at a time. With that resolution he put on his helmet, climbed on his bike and headed to the park to speak with God before he went to bed, the Mutt trotting along behind him.



As Vincent boarded the plane for the Teaching Mission conference in Washington, he reflected upon this path that he had chosen. He had always been somewhat of an elitist—he liked to think that he knew things others did not. He had also been very much into the logical rather than the emotional perspective on life. Those attitudes seemed, on the surface, somewhat at odds with his interest in the Urantia Book and the Teaching Mission.

Yet when he thought about it, perhaps he was a prime candidate for such interests. He was just reaching forty years old, traditionally a time for questioning prior assumptions. He was generally open to new ideas. He wasn't tied to any dogma or religious denomination. He was, in fact, uninterested in religion generally. He was educated, in the traditional sense. And he valued tolerance, which was broadly prescribed by the Urantia Book and the Teaching Mission. Plus he liked the logical consistency found in the Urantia Book and expanded upon by the teachers in their lessons. So, while on the surface his interest in spiritual pursuits was surprising, a closer look revealed that he was actually a good candidate for the knowledge that he had gained on this path.

He was interested in meeting others at the national conference to see what paths they had walked to get them to this place. He thought about the comments that Will had made when discussing the upcoming meeting. Vincent had brought them along, together with other transcripts, so he could review them on the long flight to the West Coast. He especially liked the dialogue he'd had with Will right before he left.

VINCENT: *Do you have any suggestions for the upcoming Teaching Mission conference?*

WILL: Take time to commune with the heavenly Father, morning and evening.

When you are inclined to speak sharply to your companions, hold your tongue.

Treat the small children firmly, but fairly.

When you have much, and others have little, share what you have with them.

Show tolerance to strangers, and those who hold views which are antagonistic to yours, or which you feel are not as advanced and sophisticated as your own.

If you could do these things for one day, the conference will be a success. It is inherent in the structures, in the directions of the life energy in your time and society, that you pay close attention to form, but when you walk in God's light, things have a way of taking care of themselves. Relax. Things will work out. To undertake such a project is itself stressful. These efforts count for much. But no effort is worth the price of progress if it causes you to lose

sight of the main intention and effort which, in your case, is to share brother- and sisterhood with like-minded persons of both greater and lesser ability to communicate, and who have genuine and casual interests in the Teaching Mission. In God's scheme, all things work out. He has even arranged it so that all works out for the best!

Vincent chuckled. He liked the description of how to have a successful conference. A casual looseness with faith that it will work out for the best. He was never too keen on conferences where every minute was scheduled. He liked spontaneity and unplanned interaction.

He smiled as he reclined his seat back in the plane.

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Waiting at the airport in Seattle for his connecting flight to Spokane, Vincent recognized some people who were also on their way to the conference. He greeted them warmly and they compared stories of their travels so far. When they arrived in Spokane, by now a group of eight people, they all went outside to wait for their transportation to Cheney. Some admitted that they had neglected to notify the conference planners of their arrival time, and began to worry that the vehicle coming to pick them up would not be big enough to hold them all. No rental cars were available, either, because of other events taking place in the area. But Vincent was calm. He counseled them not to fret, that there was nothing to be gained by worrying, and assured them everything would work out. They were all struck by Vincent's confidence. How could he be so sure?

As they sat outside the terminal, a couple of strangers who were also waiting for transportation casually asked the group what they were doing in Spokane. Vincent, emboldened, replied, "We are here to discuss the spiritual transformation of the world and the process by which the world is going to be changed."

The women laughed nervously, not knowing whether to take Vincent seriously and, if so, whether he might be dangerous. It reminded Vincent of the sentiment portrayed on a bumper sticker he had seen recently: "God, protect me against your followers."

He waited for them to respond and, sensing their hesitation, gave them a broad smile, winked, and said, "Aren't you interested in how we plan to accomplish this—and how you can assist?"

Perceiving that Vincent was probably harmless, they smiled back. "Okay," they challenged him, "How?"

"I'm glad you asked!" replied Vincent. "The only thing that can change this world is an attitude adjustment. We must all see each other as children of God, therefore part of the same family. To make this world a better place we must perform small acts of kindness for our brothers and sisters. Do you think you can do that, to help transform the world?"

The women exchanged uncertain looks but said nothing. Their car arrived, they got in, and as they pulled away from the curb one of them rolled down the window and called out, "Okay, I'll try it!" She smiled and waved at Vincent as they drove out of sight.

Vincent's friends had been silently watching, wondering how the women would take to his daring approach. With a big grin Vincent turned around. "See?" he said with a flourish, "Nothing to it. Why, we should have this world transformed in no time!" They could tell that he was in full swing and were ready to give him some good-natured ribbing, when their van pulled up.

When the van driver announced that she could only haul six people because that's how many seats were available, Vincent persuaded her to let two people sit in the back with the luggage. Before the driver could protest, everyone and their bags were loaded into the van, and although it was a tight fit, they were all in a cheerful mood as they approached the college campus where the conference was being held. In settling up, the driver announced that on top of the \$15 base fare, they would be charged separately unless they were members of the same family. Vincent couldn't restrain himself. He insisted they were all part of the brotherhood and sisterhood of God and therefore all part of the same family. The driver sighed and shook her head, but grudgingly allowed the discount. Vincent tipped her well and they were off to sign in for the conference and get situated in their rooms.



As Vincent waited to register, he studied the others standing in line. Although he knew none of them, he noticed that they were all glowing with the excitement that comes from embarking on a new adventure. Funny, he thought, how the Teaching Mission had, if nothing else, captured the imagination of those involved and spurred them on to act out their highest spiritual concepts. Everyone he knew who was connected with the mission agreed that they had been jolted out of their intellectual safe havens and encouraged to go forth and practice those spiritual principles. And here they were, gathered together to share stories of their experiences in this quest.

After registering, Vincent walked over to find his room. He had never been to the Cheney region before. It was a lovely summer day and the sun shone brightly and warmly. He felt good as he strolled across the campus. The students attending summer school scurried around between classes and he marveled at how young they all looked.

After dropping off his bag, he located the main meeting room. Inside, he noticed a computer set up to communicate with the Internet group who couldn't attend, and a table displaying T-shirts and other conference mementos. In front of an enormous stone fireplace was a large stage area, surrounded by about a hundred chairs. In the corner stood a piano where a group could gather to sing their favorite songs.

"Hey, Vincent!"

Vincent turned around. Who should be standing there but his old buddy, Roland.

"Roland, you old coot, you made it!"

They laughed out loud as they threw their arms around each other, then together they took off to explore the campus and catch up on what had happened to them since they last saw each other.

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Machiventa called the teachers to order.

“Okay, everyone, let’s settle down. We have a lot to discuss and I know that each of you has other things to do as well. First, I would like to update you on the progress of our mission. We have had a quick start with much success; however, we must be ever vigilant and push onward. The number of groups under celestial instruction has continued to increase and we are now witnessing the first national Teaching Mission conference, in which many of you are participating. But when you look at the world as a whole, it is evident that there is much work to be done and few to do the work. We are reaching out to as many people as possible to encourage them to shine forth love to all they meet. These contacts are rarely recognized as celestial nudging, and are more often viewed as intuitive responses. Many people are open to such promptings. But before we approach an individual, we assess his or her present situation and attempt to put across the thought of loving kindness within a framework from which they would best respond. So few people are being consciously taught by celestial teachers because so very few are open to such a possibility. Yet, I believe that in time, as people become more enlightened, these numbers will grow.

“It does not matter whether people accept the reality of celestial contact in their lives. While most believe in angels and the reality of the celestial realms, it is too much of a stretch for them

to be able to accept that they could personally have a celestial teacher. The real importance of our mission is not to convince mortals of our existence, but instead to impart to them the message of the ages—to love their neighbor as God loves them, and understand that each person is a child of God. This basic message, if accepted and acted upon by each person on this planet, would immediately transform this world. Yet, it cannot happen overnight. There is too much hatred, greed, pain, fear, poverty, intolerance and lust standing in the way. But, in time, we will prevail, for our message of love cannot fail. Love will conquer all of the problems of this world, and our students, both conscious and unconscious of our methods, will spearhead this effort with their grace.

“Our students are not perfect. They are subject to all the problems and difficulties that all others will face. It is our hope that our lessons, and our urging them to seek the stillness and commune with the fragment of God within them, will provide the security that allows them to see beyond their adversities to the lessons that may be learned from them, to have faith that they are under the watchcare of God at all times. We are hopeful that our students will be so fragrant in their faith that they will draw others to them and infect them with ‘the virus of love,’ until it becomes an epidemic that will sweep this confused world into the ages of planetary and personal transformation.

“We anticipate that this process will take many generations. Yet, the largest mountain is scaled one step at a time. We are taking the first steps. Don’t be concerned by the apparent chaos in the world; just keep your focus on the stage we are in.

“For those of you who are participating in the national Teaching Mission conference now in progress, you need to get back to your students. Present to them the basic lessons of this mission and encourage them to set an example for others. Thank them for their resolve and reassure them that we love them dearly and that God loves everyone on this planet equally. Then encourage them to meet and greet one another, the heart connection being the primary benefit of such gatherings as these. Thank you for your kind attention.

“Now let’s get moving!”



Approximately one hundred people were gathered for the opening ceremonies. The introductory speech was given by a student named Bob, who was an old hand at public speaking. After welcoming those who had traveled so far to attend, he began his talk by reminding the audience that truth could be found in many places. To prepare for the conference, he said, he had pored through books from many different belief systems and religious philosophies and culled statements of loving kindness. He read these out, showing that all spiritual teachings contained a common foundation of truth. Bob's reading lent further weight to the lessons they had received admonishing them not to criticize another's religious convictions but rather to identify and praise the good in their beliefs. By holding up the best, the emphasis would illuminate their highest values and eventually crowd out any errors. This method of dealing with other believers did not come naturally to those who believed they were in possession of *the* truth, so the teachers needed to constantly remind the students of the technique's importance. How to practice this technique was the substance of Bob's speech and it was well received.

It was followed by a representative from each group coming before the assembly to describe their group, and explain how they came to be involved in the Teaching Mission. Most of them began as Urantia Book reader groups who had been exposed to teacher transcripts and who had then prayed for, and received, a teacher.

None of those who could communicate with celestial teachers expressed total confidence in their ability to receive unadulterated messages; however, all were energized by the thought of attempting to put the lessons of the Urantia Book and the teachers into practice. Many told similar stories of years of intellectually understanding the Urantia Book's lessons without ever making a concerted effort to apply the teachings in their everyday lives. Although the experiences differed from group to group, all agreed that the teachers had transformed their groups and that the fruits of their experiences were good.

After the sharing session, everyone joined together around the piano to sing familiar spiritual songs, led by a talented singer

from California named Lily. Vincent's favorite was the old Amish hymn, "How Can I Keep from Singing?" For hours afterward, the words kept going round and round in his mind:

"If God is ruler of heaven and Earth, how can I keep from singing?"



That night, impromptu teacher messages were received by small groups. Vincent visited several of them and kept notes. These were some of his favorites:

"The substance of our messages will be the seed that strikes the chord within those persons ready to hear. The message can be stripped of all foreign trappings and presented in its pure form in a manner which is most effective to germinate the seed. The message will be presented differently to different people. A quick study of a person's position and perspective will be needed before a proper approach can be selected. Some people will appear to be so closed as to make any approach seem impossible at that time, but usually there is an opening—a crack in the armor. You should assume there is a way if your path has been led to cross theirs. Coincidences are becoming harder to come by. Opportunities abound!"

"Faith in action, that's what each day should exemplify. You are to be a beacon for those in the darkness. You will act as a conduit for His love. You will serve as an example of a person of integrity, knowledge, service and love. Your judgment can discern the path to the truth. Others will look to you and you will be there, solid as a rock, representing the Father's way. Light the way; many are ready to follow. That's faith in action."

"Opportunity arises at a crossroad, an encounter, a point of decision. View each crossroad as a chance to choose the Father's path, each encounter as an opportunity to plant a seed and each decision as a strengthening of character. Living day to day will take on a whole new meaning. Goals will change. Priorities will be shuffled. Service to others, unselfish service, will rise to the top.

Don't underestimate the influence one person can have. Reach. Take chances. Enjoy the journey—it only gets better."

"The days are short. When you look back on this life, memories of being about the Father's business will have the most lasting value. Don't rely upon the material world for security; it cannot deliver such a gift. Only the Father can provide the security you seek, that all humans seek. Without His loving attitude, your ship will certainly run onto the shoals. Raise His sails and sail His path. The Father knows your needs. His storerooms are amply supplied. His crews do not go wanting; they are filled with His love and the supply is inexhaustible. The Father's path—it is yours for the choosing."

"Transformations take time. Although things are moving at breakneck speed, the people must, through freewill choice, accept the Father's message and incorporate the will of the Father into their lives, one person at a time. Accordingly, the completion of the task will take generations. It will certainly have a good foothold during this generation. Even a casual review of the last year will surprise you with the changes that have occurred in those involved. Change is in the air. The age of enlightenment is upon this planet. It will be recognized by all who seek the truth. By its fruits will this endeavor be known. All hail! Our Father has stirred."



Vincent stumbled into bed at midnight, local time. That was 3 a.m. his time and, although he considered himself a night owl, it was late even for him. He hated to miss anything, though, and only went to bed when he couldn't stay awake any longer. His first day at the conference had been an extraordinary one. He had made many new friends, reacquainted himself with others, and thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship of like-minded souls. He drifted off to sleep to prepare himself for another unforgettable day.

And he was not to be disappointed.

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The conference utilized the campus food service, so Vincent and the others ate in the cafeteria with the students who were in summer school. For the conference attendees, it was almost like being transported back in time to when they had been in college. The beautiful grounds, the dorms, the institutional food and the brick buildings—all reminded Vincent of his university days in the South. This added to the fun of the weekend, and it also provided an opportunity for him to talk to the students he sat with.



That afternoon, after lunch, the program called for breakout sessions where different topics were offered for discussion: healing, stillness practice, a history of the Teaching Mission—even a session on the Melchizedek schools that had been predicted. As could be expected, the largest crowd assembled for that particular discussion. People are always interested in physical manifestations of spiritual activities and the possibilities of actually meeting a Melchizedek in physical form.

Vincent and Roland had already overcome their desire to physically see a Melchizedek, so they resolved to wait patiently to see what would happen with the Melchizedeks. When others expressed their enthusiasm about the subject, Roland was quick to caution patience, reminding them that they were already under

the instruction of the Melchizedeks; but his sentiments were in the minority.

It was decided that each attendee give a short description of how they envisioned the schools and of the position they would like to hold on the faculty. It was a popular exercise. Vincent said he wanted to be the diving coach, as in "diving into life." Roland was the only one who got the joke, but he was used to Vincent's twisted sense of humor.

After the sharing, a young man acted as the receiver for a Melchizedek who confirmed their intent to establish schools for teaching the mortals on this planet. He did not specify when such schools would come into existence or where they would be located, but he did hint that they would be established within the lifetimes of those in the room. He also mentioned the possibility of more celestials arriving to assist in the upliftment. These types of announcements excited everyone and were the major topic of conversation throughout the rest of the conference. Roland and Vincent took it in stride and agreed to take things one day at a time. If Melchizedeks did materialize, they would deal with them when the time came. Until then, they had enough personal growth to work on so as not to be bored. In a playful mood, Roland asked the Melchizedek if one of them would consider materializing as a Black woman so that the prejudice so strongly held on this planet would be mitigated by such a bright being in the form of a minority. Everyone laughed and, of course, the Melchizedek declined to say what they would look like when they appeared in human form.

At the evening general meeting, one of the teachers spoke about the Teaching Mission: "Greetings to you all! If you could only see the celestial multitude gathered to witness this event, you would be truly amazed. We have great hopes for each of you and for many others on this planet. We, of course, need your help and the help of every mortal who will choose to exhibit the love of the Father in their daily lives.

"I would like to give you some idea of the scope of this mission and of its duration. As many of you have surmised, this effort is not limited to this group or to those who have read the Urantia Book. We have searched the planet for any person or group that

we can nudge toward the love of God and the understanding of that love. We have been working on this for some time, long before any of you were born. Many people are consciously or unconsciously working to further the upliftment of this planet. Anyone who desires assistance is provided it. We work with many people, some who hold pivotal positions, but most because they are open to our encouragements and are seeking truth about this life and the life hereafter. Many have heard the call. Many will feel the pull. It will feel right for them. The spirit of God is active. Seeds have been scattered throughout the world. Many are watering them. Much is afoot. Continue to tread your spiritual path and stay in the present. Don't worry about tomorrow; it is in God's hands.

"It is no coincidence that you are here. We have nurtured each of you since your earliest years. Few knew it, but there were hints—if you but think back, you will remember—coincidences, people you encountered who influenced your life or whose life you influenced. We have prepared diligently for this time. We are readying this planet for a spiritual enlightenment that will shake the materialistic foundations upon which this world is currently built. Indeed, many souls thirst for the knowledge and light that we bring. You are asked to prepare, to transform yourselves into vessels of light and love so that when those desiring this advanced knowledge seek you out, you will be ready.

"Each of you must take this knowledge of the upcoming dispensation and use it, not to forsake your jobs or practical senses, but to augment your daily life with a joyful countenance. You must see the divine in every event. You should no longer consider any experience mundane. Each opportunity should be seized and utilized. Each person should be approached as a brother or sister. Each service you can provide for those you encounter should be unselfishly delivered without expectation of repayment. You should be valuing the love that can flow through you and reveling in adversity. You are to become ambassadors for the new kingdom—teachers and examples. Yours is a solemn responsibility, but one that will free you to live in the present, fully and with joy. That is what will be asked of you. Those actions should be your goal right now whether the expected Melchizedek materializa-

tions occur tomorrow or in a hundred years. That is your charge. That is what we need from you.

"As you go about this personal transformation, keep in mind that those you encounter may also be on this path, but coming from another perspective. You never know if a person you meet will impart to you a lesson or if it is you who will do the same for them. But, either way, you will both benefit. So every morning when you arise, thank God for another day, spend some time in the stillness and then, filled with the grace and love of God, go forth into the day and look for the opportunities to pass that love on. We will be with you, behind the scenes, attempting to arrange for your path to cross another's who may need to hear what you have to say or to receive the love that you have to give.

"This is the Correcting Time. We will change this world one person at a time. It will not occur overnight but, have no fear, we shall not fail! We thank everyone who will assist in this process and I bid you goodnight."



After the lesson, the musically talented gathered their instruments and played and sang for the group. Others joined in, and Vincent was sure he could sense the celestial artisans warmly appreciating the human efforts to glorify the Divine Parent with music and song.

As the music tapered off, people broke into small groups, to either socialize and share experiences or talk to teachers. Vincent had earlier been introduced to Jim, a man he had communicated with over the Internet. The two sat under a street light on an old red transformer and talked into the night. Jim told Vincent about his path and the many adversities and personal setbacks he had faced, his being ushered out of a church when the minister did not approve of his questions, about his time with a fundamentalist group who tried to stop him from dating a woman he loved, about his discovery of the Urantia Book, his solitary struggle, and his latest love and family. Vincent sat spellbound through Jim's incredible story, all the while thinking about the different paths that had led them all to this particular moment, all the while think-

ing how much he liked his new friend, all the while thinking about the connections between people and the importance of those connections, all the while thinking about his responsibility to transform himself for his work in this new dispensation.



The next morning Vincent dragged himself out of bed and headed straight to the cafeteria. He hadn't slept enough, but he felt energized and happy just seeing these diverse people gathered together to worship and to confirm their intent to seek God's will in their lives. At breakfast, the good feeling was palpable. Vincent had borrowed a camera and was taking pictures of everyone so he could show them to his friends back home.

He sat down to eat with Roland and the two talked about their unlikely paths, two basically unremarkable people who had no history of spiritual interest and who appeared to be the least likely candidates for playing a role this awakening. They laughed at the irony of it, but noted that throughout history some of the most devoted seekers had also been unremarkable people. If two laggards like Vincent and Roland were welcomed, it was an indication that there were no restrictions as to who could participate in this mission. That, they decided, was the most appealing thing about this Teaching Mission. Nobody in particular was in charge, and those who had been attracted to its purpose were so sundry and assorted that it was clearly a universal urging meant for any who felt the tug. They speculated that this urging was being felt all over the world, that people were responding in so many venues and in so many ways that this was, indeed, a worldwide upliftment in progress. Obviously, it could not be limited to a relatively small group such as the Teaching Mission. As they reflected on the reported happenings in other groups and with other seekers, it was clear that there were indeed celestial whispers in the ears of many, who were responding with a loving attitude. And that was what was important—not that anyone recognize or believe in the Teaching Mission, but that they feel and reflect the love of God in their everyday lives.

As Roland and Vincent got up to take their breakfast dishes to the kitchen, Roland held his arms up above his head and, with a broad smile, proclaimed loudly, "It's a beautiful day! Let's all make the most of it!" People all around, many of whom were students with no idea of what type of conference was going on, looked around and all began smiling—which may have changed their attitudes for the rest of the day.

At least Vincent hoped so.



At this get-together it became apparent that many different types of people were drawn to the mission—professionals, laborers, students, teachers, parents, grandparents, children—people of all different shapes, sizes and colors. Although there were the usual presentations, entertainment and breakout sessions, in Vincent's mind the real value of the conference was in the meeting and greeting of the people, feeling their love, getting hugs, and sharing stories.

Many acted as transmitters for their groups and delivered teacher lessons. Some people questioned the intentions of some of the transmitters, believing them to be suffering from an ego-based need to be the center of attention. Vincent discussed this topic privately with one of the attendees who had suggested that some of the others were not truly in contact with supernals. Vincent acknowledged that the wide-open nature of the Teaching Mission naturally lent itself to people who might be seeking to fill a personal need, or who were delusional or even fraudulent. But, he argued, there is really only one solution—to let the Spirit of Truth guide everyone into discerning the truth for themselves.

Some of the transcripts resonated less strongly with Vincent than others, suggesting possible human contamination. Vincent recommended that each person involved take nothing as gospel, but test each lesson, take from it whatever benefit was there, and disregard the rest.

Even if the transmitter was not really connected with celestial teachers, what would the remedy be? Would there be a creden-

tials committee to evaluate the messages delivered by the teacher of this or that transmitter? And who would decide? Wasn't that even worse than having someone who might be an unreliable transmitter? Vincent argued the practicalities of such a process and pointed out the problems inherent in making such a determination. It was argued that some might be taken in by a false message and end up doing something foolish which could hurt the entire mission, not to mention the damage it could do to the believer himself. In reply, Vincent stated that everyone would have to be responsible for their own spiritual growth and if they were taken in by such an appeal, then they obviously needed that lesson and it wasn't up to anyone to intervene in the experience. Besides, he reminded them, all lessons could be tested by the fruits they produced.

Vincent was very *laissez faire* regarding his position on the Teaching Mission and, in the end, it was easier and probably more beneficial to just let things take their natural course. And, because of the widespread dissemination of the lessons of all the teachers, any material diversion from the basic loving message would be instantly discernable. The true seeker would not be misled.

Most significant of all was that not one person had attempted to become the "one true source" of teacher contact.

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Machiventa called the teachers together again. These daily meetings were scheduled to continue until the planet had been eased into the ages of Light and Life, which they all projected would take at least a thousand years. But, despite the time it would take, each day was greeted by the celestial participants with excitement and expectation.

“Okay, everyone listen up!”

The assembled celestials quieted down to listen to the chief Melchizedek.

“Good morning! We have a lot going on. Today is the last day of the Teaching Mission conference and we would like to leave the participants with lessons they can take with them which will spur them on to further service.

“These are great times. These mortals don’t understand the wonder of it all or the effect that their loving actions have on the people they encounter. They can’t appreciate what is going on in its fullness; yet they have glimpsed the enormity of this effort and have offered their services in its behalf. They are the real heroes, yet they don’t even know it. They can, through their everyday actions, spread love and light in ways we can’t. They have the ability to influence the course of human and celestial events. These people and those like them are indispensable to this mission. They are only the beginning. Soon more and more will feel the pull of the spirit and will be led to transform their lives to shine forth the

love that they are so freely granted. These early participants are the spark. The tinder is dry and ready to be ignited, and when it catches fire the flames of this loving attitude will sweep over the planet. It is important not to praise them too much, for such praise can cause them to pull back in the fear that they are pursuing this path for self-aggrandizement. Instead, remind them that when much is given, much is expected. Challenge them to seek the highest path. Ignite their passion for service and love. Have them raise the banner and go forth to meet and greet those they encounter. Encourage them to smile.

"This being the last day of the conference, we will all be watching. For those of you who get the opportunity to speak through one of the participants, remember the focus that we seek to emphasize. Other than that, each of you is released to witness the remainder of the conference at your leisure. It promises to be fun."



At the opening meeting of the last day of the conference there was an air of reflection about what was to follow in the coming year. Various people offered to head up projects. It was announced that a daily calendar with teacher quotes from different parts of the country would be assembled, and all were asked to send in their favorite one-liners from their teachers. A group offered to sponsor a Teaching Mission conference in Hawaii. People used the on-site computers to send messages to those who could not be present, but who were monitoring the electronic bulletin boards for the latest conference news.

Most of all there was an outpouring of love. Although the small conference was attended by people from all over the country and even other parts of the world, such as Russia, a special bond had formed between the members of the groups. People were hugging each other and exchanging addresses and phone numbers so they could stay in touch. The musicians played for the crowd, and whenever people knew the words they sang along. A woman named Sharon stood up and announced that she had finished raising her children and, now that they were grown, she

had decided to spend the upcoming year going wherever the spirit led her. She would travel and see what kind of synchronistic events occurred, promising to report back on her experiences the following year.



Several felt the urge to transmit a lesson from the teachers, so from time to time a message was relayed to the group. The first one of the day was short and to the point.

“You are all excited about the future—your role in the upliftment of this planet as well as your personal transformation. That is all good; however, don’t become blind to the need for love in your everyday relations. It is easy to become caught up in a massive event that may be on the horizon, but it is much more difficult to see each experience through spiritual eyes. Indeed, for you to be an influence on anyone, it is important that you treat every moment as a gift from God. Every event must be seen as an opportunity for growth and service. The otherwise mundane and habitual activities must be imbued with a new light. Indeed, nothing is commonplace. Every happening can be converted into a living example of truth, beauty and goodness in time. Stay with that perspective as much as you can. Be a joyful companion to those you meet along the way. Be a light in an otherwise dark situation. Throw out your fears and have faith in God.

“All is well.”

Although Vincent was enjoying the last day of the conference, he took some time before lunch to go off by himself to reflect on everything that had happened to him and what might still happen. The first thing that came to mind was the improbability of it all. One visit to a mall is all it would take to remind him of the general public's disinterest in spiritual matters and its extreme absorption in material realities. The masses, it seemed, were motivated by their desire for entertainment and consumer goods: "sex, drugs & rock'n'roll." The things that were important to most people struck Vincent as indicative of the long way this world had to go before advancing into the ages of Light and Life.

How could he possibly make a difference? How could one person do much of anything? Whenever he thought about the enormity of the problem and the swarms of people who would need a change in attitude, he would begin to feel despondent. But then he would stop, take a deep breath and remind himself that it was not his job to personally change the world. It was his job to transform himself so that he could influence his family, his friends, his co-workers, and those strangers he came in contact with. He could only do what he could do. This same type of thinking had already led him to stop watching the evening news, which would make him worry about the many places where injustice abounded, where wars were being fought and where poverty and famine were rampant. What could he do about it, other than agonize and

send small amounts of money? So, instead of watching the news and losing sleep over it, he began to look for local problems he could lend a hand in solving.



At the closing session of the conference, one person after another stood up to acknowledge the effect that the love shared at this event had had on them. Everyone was excited about the future, felt rejuvenated, and looked forward to going back home to continue their work of spreading light.

For the finale, Eric led the group in a participatory song called, "I Need a Hug," which encouraged everyone to hug those nearby. It didn't take much prompting to get this group into a hugging mood, and the conference ended in a mass hug-a-thon—a fun and fitting conclusion for the event.

Before parting, they were treated to a final lesson. It was from Michael:

"My beautiful friends, I extend to you my love and assistance. Go forth to spread my word, but more importantly, spend time with the Father of us all each day. Remember that I will be at your beck and call. You are all supported and loved every second of the day. Look for the opportunities to spread love and selfless service in each and every encounter. Have no fear. Give it all up and know that each of you is an evolving spirit. This life is but a moment in your long and joyous ascension to the Father. No one knows how much time they have remaining, so be about the Father's work. There is no time like the present.

"Carry my banner. You are the advance guard. You will not attempt to knock down the barriers to my message but instead will look for the good in all you meet. You will listen to your brothers and sisters and provide them with the service they need at that time. No one is forced to believe in my words. No one, however, is inclined to refuse loving service when in need. Provide them that service. Provide them my light without confronting them with dogma or ritual. Love them where they are on their path. They do not need to be on the same path that you

have chosen. Indeed, variety is favored in the universe. Any path to the Father is sufficient. Impart what you can. Plant seeds. Love all. Do not judge any.

"Thank you for your tireless commitment to my mission. If you could but know how we cherish you and those like you who seek to do the Father's will! We know you and watch you closely. Although you must live this life and will not be spared the slings and arrows of this world, you will approach such adversities with the knowledge that your universe citizenship and your eternal career are intact. You will take the best from those adversities and go forth with a calm assurance which will, in and of itself, exude a grace that will do more for the spread of my message than all the sermons in the world. You preach best by your actions. Without them your words ring hollow. Transform yourselves and walk with your head high. You are ambassadors of the kingdom and we love you so. Go now to your respective homes and shine. Shine forth the Father's light. My peace I leave with you."



With that, the conference was over. The participants returned to their homes, renewed and recommitted to the task at hand. There was much to do and each had a part to play in the unfolding of Michael's plan. This process required both a global view and a personal view of the mission. Although it was important to remember that the global goal was to bring this world to the ages of Light and Life, the personal work was by far the more important of the two. It was only through each individual effort that the greater objective seemed legitimately attainable.

Vincent's family had flown out to meet him after the conference, and the four of them went touring together around the Pacific Northwest. Vincent's prime concern now was how to better relate to his immediate family. This was sometimes one of his most difficult challenges. Not only is it often easier to spread love to strangers, he confessed, but it is hard to ignore the baggage that most families have collected over the years and continue to carry around with them. This was a condition not unique within his family or Teaching Mission families; it existing in families every-

where whose inability to love and relate to one another led to divorce, abuse and fear. It was one of the most serious problems to be faced and solved in the Correcting Time.

In Canada, Vincent and his family visited Whistler Ski Resort, set in a spectacular mountain range north of Vancouver. Though it was a perfect summer day, they spotted skiers on a glacier high atop one of the mountains. The family had made no reservations, preferring to travel unencumbered by plans and schedules. Vincent decided his life was structured enough without extending that structure into his vacation; in addition, he found that when they moved about spontaneously, they had more interesting and unexpected experiences to look back on later.

It was the end of the day and Whistler was at the end of the road. Vincent wondered if his theory was about to backfire, because the only hotel left was a first-class establishment at the foot of the mountain, the same place whose concierge had told Lucy no rooms were available when she'd called to check earlier. Nevertheless, they pulled over so Lucy could get out and ask at the desk if there were other accommodations in the area. Vincent and the kids, meanwhile, sat in the car admiring the glorious dusky sunset. When Lucy didn't return right away, Riley and Katie began to worry that they would have nowhere to sleep, but Vincent calmly assured them that the "hotel angels" were even then on the lookout for a suitable place for them. The kids were used to hearing about Vincent's parking angels, but they were skeptical about the untested "hotel angels."

After some time, Lucy came out of the hotel with a surprised look on her face. While she was calling a rental agent to make reservations elsewhere, the agent suddenly noticed a cancellation at the very hotel from which Lucy was calling, and was even able to get the room at a reduced rate! As Lucy told them the story, the kids flashed Vincent a look of disbelief. Vincent smiled and winked back at them. Those hotel angels had come through.



The vacation went well and they had numerous memorable experiences. Vincent and Lucy got along better after the trip, yet

she was still unsettled about the women Vincent was meeting on his spiritual path. There were two things at work here. First, those who undergo a personal spiritual awakening are more than passingly interested in others who are having the same experience. This makes people on spiritual paths very attractive to each other, and this spiritual magnetism can lead to romantic entanglements. Vincent was well aware of that and let Lucy know that such was not his intention. Yet while Lucy might trust Vincent, she did not trust the other women, who she imagined were plotting to abscond with her husband.

Second, Lucy understood that a spiritual awakening was much like being in love—it can blind people to the reality of a situation, leading them to ignore their obligations and go headlong into what turns out to be a dead end. This happened to the Christians in Jerusalem after Jesus was crucified. They were so consumed with the idea that he would return to take them to back to heaven, that they sold all their assets and waited. Finally they ran out of money and reality set in. It's the same when people give up everything to follow a charismatic leader of a religious sect; in the heat of a religious high, it is not uncommon for normally wary individuals to throw caution to the wind.

This is part of the lesson, Vincent reasoned. Although the spiritual path through the Teaching Mission with its attendant hopes of helping to uplift the world was still new and exciting, it had to be a long-term commitment or the bloom would fade and there would be disappointment. Honeymoon love, after all, cannot last forever.

The lesson, then, was that the love that was being encouraged was not the flash-in-the-pan type of love, but the sincere, transformative love that changes you forever, the kind that outlasts the initial enthusiasm, that results in a person imbued with grace, tolerance and good will. And it was that attitude that Vincent was attempting to adopt, that love that he was desirous of embodying. He wanted to demonstrate those attributes to Lucy, to allay her fears of him “shaving his head, giving away all his assets and chanting at the airport.” He also assured her that he was not romantically interested in the women.

Still, she was disconcerted by it all. And rightly so.

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Roland was also fired up as he headed home. He, like Vincent, had his ups and downs. It isn't easy, when living in a material world, to stay in a spiritual frame of mind. Perceptions are primarily through the physical senses, so the world doesn't often validate the spiritual path. Yet Roland was able to keep his eyes open and was often rewarded with experiences that he could only explain from a nonphysical perspective.

It was turning out that the many texts he had read were correct. Ideas are indeed real, and can create reality. He now recognized it in his own life. As he continued what he considered to be a mission to spread light, fully believing that he was being assisted by celestial personalities, he found people who were in need of that light. He was serendipitously placed in situations where he was able to accomplish his mission. What he believed was becoming his reality.

The more he thought about it as he drove home, the more he could see that people everywhere were not just pawns in the events of life, but were actively involved in co-creating their own world. Those who were pessimistic and fearful drew the very things to them that they were afraid of. Those who were optimistic and fearless seemed to attract goodness and were generally happier. In the past he had always assumed that such people were blinding themselves to the truth in their lives, but it was more than that. They were creating the good by expecting it!

He rolled down the window as he drove through Idaho, leaned out of the window and smiled his biggest smile. He was spreading love.

The angels working with him smiled as well. They were lining up his next opportunity and it wouldn't be long before it presented itself.



Machiventa Melchizedek called the teachers to order.

"Historically on this planet there have been individuals who were particularly sensitive to the leadings of celestial personalities. These people were known as prophets, psychics, witches, savants, and any number of other designations. Many of them betrayed their trust and attempted to profit from their relationship with us. More, however, acted as keepers of the light. They continued to remind humanity at large of the bigger picture. Some were more effective than others. All were utilized in an attempt to continue disseminating the basic truths until more general revelatory activities could be initiated.

"Today we have a new focus. It is now time for the people to be reached individually and not through intermediaries. That is why we encourage, as our primary teaching, that each person take time to commune with the First Source and Center, known by many names but most generally on this planet as God. You see, we may act as a catalyst of sorts, but God truly is the guiding light. We do very little by comparison.

"One thing we can do, however, is to utilize the present-day intermediaries to carry our message to the people. Those who are sensitive to the truth of our lessons will hopefully be able to effectively convey that message without the barriers that most people sense when someone is attempting to convince them that they have *the* truth. We often speak of building bridges, not breaking down barriers. You should know that there are many barriers to our message. If the message is appended to any dogma, text, religion or person, then there will be barriers to its acceptance. That is why we continue to advise our students to demonstrate what we teach through small acts of kindness and selfless service. When

the love of God is exhibited in such activities, there can be no barrier to its conveyance.

“Of course, to be able to deliver service to those encountered, our students will first have to listen to the needs of others on their paths and discern what it is that can be provided to them. It may be to give directions, or a smile, or to open a door. It could be much more. But our students should not expect that the service will be world shattering, although, truly, if this is practiced daily at every opportunity, then it will be shattering to the world of our students. Their world will be transformed as their attitudes change. What I mean, as you have probably surmised, is that when imbued by such an attitude, each act can be one of service, no matter how small.

“This brings me to our next step: patience. When our students start out in this mission, they may be impatient to be about the big things that will change the world and not be satisfied to practice the small acts of kindness. Remind them that this change must begin with them and must manifest itself in their everyday lives. Their daily activities may not change, but *they* will change. This mission is not about quitting jobs and going up to a mountaintop to meditate. Quite the opposite. It is about doing whatever the student is doing now, but doing it from an entirely new perspective. Although everything may appear to remain the same, it has all changed because the student has individually changed. And that is how we will change this world.

“We also need to encourage our students to be clear channels for God’s love. To accomplish this they may need to do some inner clearing, to wipe the lens clean so that the light can more easily shine in and be transmitted. We encourage each of them to spend time with Michael and ask that he shoulder their burdens, that they let go of their inner fears and have faith in the ultimate good that will come from each experience. We ask them to step out into the light of day prepared to confront life’s trials and tribulations with good cheer and confidence.

“This path our students tread is not to a destination that is reached overnight. Many days they will wonder if they are actually going anywhere, for things may seem to be standing still. Life must continue to be lived, problems faced and setbacks accepted.

All of that is part of the experience of being on this world. Yet with desire and effort things will change for the better. Remind them that this is a long haul, but that the rewards are worth the struggle. They won't be shielded from life's vicissitudes, but they will be presented with golden opportunities they may not have had, had they not been seekers.

"In conclusion, this is a difficult assignment for which you have volunteered. Don't despair! We have established a foothold and we can see movement. Although it will take time, we will not fail! Stay the course and if any of you would like to speak with me individually, feel free to do so at your convenience.

"If there are no questions, then you are dismissed."



Vincent again had to meet a publication deadline for his column in the Religion section of his local newspaper. Overall he had received encouraging responses. A Jewish friend of his said he was impressed that the column did not have an overly Christian slant but instead spoke of more general spiritual truths. That, of course, was Vincent's intention.

Vincent noticed that people liked short parables to illustrate certain points, and he looked for suitable stories to include in his articles. He faxed the following to the editor of the newspaper:

UNTIE THE CAT

When the famous guru sat down to worship each evening, the house cat would get in the way and distract the worshipers. So the guru ordered that the cat be tied up during the evening worship. After the guru died, the cat continued to be tied during evening worship. And when the cat died, another cat was brought in so that it could be duly tied during evening worship. Centuries later, treatises were written by the guru's learned disciples on the liturgical significance of tying up a cat while worship was being performed.

Funny, isn't it, how many times we fall into patterns which become habits but lose their significance to us? Con-

sider your daily life. Do you ever think you may be on automatic pilot? When you see someone, do you address them with a practiced phrase, perhaps, "How are you doing?" Of course, this is more of an acknowledgment of the presence of another than a true question. If someone is also on automatic pilot, they will undoubtedly say, "Fine, and you?" Then you both walk away.

These patterns of habit are insidious and have a way of stealing our connection with each other. They rob us of the opportunities of the present. We miss them. Worse, these patterns can make us become uncomfortable around those who dare to step out and truly interact, who listen and are awake to the present. Or we can think poorly of someone who doesn't subscribe to the same patterns that we do. This is a problem, for it causes divisions among people.

From a spiritual perspective, we many times put our faith in rituals that have long since lost their significance. We think that our presence in a pew, or our monetary offering, is sufficient to satisfy our spiritual needs, at least for that week. In fact, the spiritual path is more about living each decision every day with a loving attitude. If love is the currency of the universe, then it is incumbent upon us to stay awake to the choices we have every day and not become a slave to our habits. If we each can live in the moment free from the bondage of our habits and can promote truth, beauty and goodness, then we will become beacons—shining examples. And we will be the best missionaries for the light that can be imagined. The tide of God's love raises all ships. Let it shine through you.

Take a different route to work today and lay off the cruise control.

The Tallahassee group quieted down as they waited for the message for the evening. As they each meditated silently, Vincent felt an energy in the room. Others had commented on it earlier, but it surprised Vincent, as he was generally insensitive to these things. His kids often made fun of him because for some reason he had lost his sense of smell. This was beneficial at times, especially when dealing with the types of smells that often permeate a house with two active children, but he did miss the smell of the flowers. He was thinking about that, when suddenly his attention was again drawn to the small living room in which the group was meeting.

“Greetings to you all. Tonight I would like to speak with you regarding the tapestry we seek to weave. This tapestry is made up of many threads, each unique, but based on love and tolerance, on community spirit, on selfless service, on the love between brothers and sisters. This tapestry, once woven, will cover the world, will warm the hearts of all beneath it, will protect and nourish each of you and each person on this planet. This tapestry is held together with the Father’s love, but it is a product that is cooperatively created. Each of you has a strand to place in the tapestry, and each of you acts to draw others to make their contribution to the finished tapestry. Although completion of this project will take many years, it immediately begins to provide warmth to those who participate. For this world is at times cold, and many seek

shelter in such a covering. They will not be disappointed, for even in its unfinished state, there will be ample to cover all who seek its sanctuary.

"Now go forth with this inspiration. You will be contributors to a great tapestry which represents all of the good, all of the beauty, all of the truth that is available to all. Your mark will be an indelible feature on this tapestry. You can assist in its completion; indeed, part of your mission is to move this tapestry towards completion, and you will do so as you reach out to your brothers and sisters in love. They will take your hand and pull the tapestry to their chins until they too are warmed by its light. Then they will reach out and the process will continue until each has woven their own piece of the fabric and has moved the tapestry further and further over more and more of their friends and neighbors. It is a beautiful sight to see, and we appreciate your active participation in the creation of a cloth so beautiful—so wonderful that, when the final threads are woven in, this world will be changed.

"Don't lose the vision of what you are about. Step forward and be leaders and comforters to those in need. I leave you with my love and my appreciation as we all join hands in a cooperative effort for the upliftment of this planet.

"Shalom."



Vincent was a little worried. One by one his old habits were vanishing. He no longer got pleasure from heavy drinking, from watching television, from gossiping, or from any number of his previous pastimes. One day he confided to Lucy that he thought he had become boring. "No way!" she said, but Vincent wasn't so sure. His friend Barry agreed with Lucy, declaring that if anything, Vincent was bordering on weird, but certainly not boring. That made Vincent feel a lot better. Being weird was okay with him, but he did not want to be boring.



One day, on his way home from the beach with Riley, Vincent decided to stop in at the Covenant House, the homeless shelter he had been supporting. It turned out to be an auspicious time to visit. One of the two families that had founded the home had moved away, and Mary Linda, the owner, needed help with painting the building. It had been two and half years since she and her husband had felt compelled to buy the run-down former fishing lodge, but so much work had gone into it that now it was very livable. It still had a long way to go, but it didn't take much imagination to see that it was on its way to becoming a jewel.

Mary Linda explained that the old paint had already been scraped and sanded, but more hands were needed to apply the primer and finish coats. Vincent surveyed the situation and promised to bring a crew down the following weekend.

The next day, at their weekly Teaching Mission meeting, Vincent laid out the plans. The group had just recently participated in the local Habitat for Humanity Blitzbuild and were invigorated by the work. The Covenant House project sounded like a good one to follow up on, and most agreed to drive down to the beach with Vincent the next Saturday to help out.

When they arrived at the Covenant House, Mary Linda immediately put them to work helping her fix up a bedroom for a new arrival who was expected that afternoon. Mary Linda and Helen bonded immediately and started working together inside, while Vincent and the others began painting primer on the exterior. It was a huge job and not one that would be finished in one day. They resigned themselves to that fact and began the task in earnest. Over the next few weekends, even their children came to help out. Vincent thought about the excellent example of giving back that the children were receiving, and concluded that, as usual, they themselves were receiving far more than they were giving.

At lunch Mary Linda told them about a woman they had come across who was walking in the middle of the road miles from anywhere. "It was raining and cold, so we stopped and asked her if she would like a ride. She accepted and was soon resting at the Covenant House. We prevailed upon her to stay for the night. This woman was different from most of our guests in that she was well-spoken and articulate, not damaged or slow, as are so many

of the homeless we care for. After the second night I looked out the window of the kitchen and saw the woman walking, with her suitcase, down the long driveway to the street. As you can see, this house sits off the road about half a mile and the circular drive goes around that stand of trees. I opened the window and shouted for her to wait so I could give her a ride. I thought it was odd that she had suddenly packed up and left without saying goodbye, but I am used to strange visitors.

"It wasn't more than a minute later when I navigated the car around the bend in the driveway. As I turned the corner around the trees I was surprised to see no sign of the woman. There was no way she could have reached the road in that time." Mary Linda paused for a moment, then, with conviction in her voice, added, "She must have been an angel."

The others nodded their heads knowingly. "It seems that angels are becoming more and more active of late," said Vincent.

"Yes," agreed Mary Linda. "There's a lot going on at this time."

They all looked at each other and burst out laughing.

Vincent had a habit of calling Roland each week after their group meetings to touch base. Although the two lived far apart, they were very much linked. Each supported the other in his times of doubt and times of adversity. And on the occasions when they had traveled together, they'd had so much fun and had been presented with so many opportunities to speak to others that Vincent hoped the two of them would work together more in the future, going out together much like the early apostles had done. This week, when Vincent called, Roland treated him to another synchronicity story. Vincent loved to hear Roland's stories and encouraged him not to leave anything out.

It happened that Roland had been heading to a ski resort in Utah for an Oktoberfest celebration. On the trip up the mountain he turned to the woman he was with and confided that he felt strongly that he was going to meet someone there. His companion laughed and reminded him that the Oktoberfest celebration was taking place in a big hall with a German "Oompah" band. The loud music and noise would all but preclude any meaningful discussions with strangers. Still, Roland couldn't shake the feeling that he was destined to have a meaningful encounter there.

"She was correct," Roland went on. "The party was noisy and talking to *her* was hard enough; speaking to anyone else was nearly impossible. After an hour or so she wanted to go outside to

get some air and smoke a cigarette. We walked out to a bridge that spanned a deep ravine through which ran an alpine stream. We sat down on the bridge and she fumbled for a match in her purse, but was unable to find one. Several others were milling around on the bridge, including a group of young men and women who appeared to be around twenty years old.

"A couple of decades ago it would have been easy to find someone with a match, but since more and more people have quit smoking, fewer and fewer have a reason to keep matches. I had a feeling that one person in particular, a young Asian man, would have a match and I made eye contact with him. He motioned in return, as if to question whether I was asking him something. I nodded yes, and we met halfway across the bridge. I asked him for a match and he said he didn't have one, that he didn't smoke. At his point I began to feel intuitively that this was one of the people I was supposed to meet. I insisted that he did indeed have matches and that I would like to borrow one.

"The young man, who was dressed in a pair of bib overalls and a flannel shirt, looked at me as if I was crazy and again told me that he didn't have matches on him. I repeated that he *did* have a package of matches and suggested that he look in the breast pocket of his overalls. He impatiently reached into his pocket and, much to his surprise, fished out a book of matches. They had a plain yellow cover with no advertisement on the outside. His face registered surprise, then bewilderment as he handed them over to me. I thanked him and walked back to my spot on the bridge where I lit my friend's cigarette.

"He returned to his friends and I watched him as he repeated the story to them, pointing in my direction as he spoke. When they saw me, I motioned for them to come over, which they did. They sat in a semi-circle and asked me how I had known about the matches. Rather than answer that, I told them I was sent to speak to them—and, more importantly, to receive from each of them a message meant for me.

"A young woman with topaz eyes, gold wire-rimmed glasses and sun-streaked blond hair sat down, looked directly at me and began speaking—hesitantly at first but with growing confidence: 'When we came to the Oktoberfest we all expected to find some-

thing here in the excitement, but looking into your eyes I see a sure knowledge of joy and I feel loved and contented in the presence of whatever seems to be here—and which told you of not only of the yellow matches . . . but you seem to know all about me and you love me as if we have known each other since . . . I don't know . . . since the beginning.'

"I then said, 'It is the spirit in me that knows the spirit in you . . . since the beginning . . . love is expressed by the spirit through your openness to receive it in your conscious mind.'

"Then the Asian man spoke: 'I see light in your eyes that is not of this world. I, too, feel loved unconditionally. What makes me feel this? How can a stranger have such an effect on me? How can you know all that you seem to know and have shown me in a glance?'

"To which I responded, 'The spirit within us works with such perfect knowing that we have neither the reasoning power nor the words to describe it.'

"The next young man sat in a state of disbelief in the power of the messages his friends had delivered, in the responses that they received and in the sincerity of the words. He commented, 'We have all come here to sit before you to learn how you knew about the matches that were in his pocket,' and, pointing to his friend, he continued, 'yet you speak of another, the spirit. Who is this spirit that whispers these things in your ear?'"

Roland replied, "First, observe that you do not sit before me. We sit in a circle as brothers and sisters, children of the one living God. The spirit of God dwells in each of us and, as we gain spiritual attunement, we begin to 'hear' and 'feel' the messages of the spirit which attend us all.

"This response seemed to satisfy the third young man and, sensing this, the fourth wasted no time in conveying his message, saying, 'I love what I feel, what I have heard here. I would like to know how I can get messages from the spirit. How do you hear messages?'

"I looked at him and said, 'My way has been to quiet my mind and to empty it of chatter. I give it to the spirit and simply feel the love of God flow through me, leaving feelings, impressions and words of spiritual guidance for me to follow.' I paused

here for a moment for my words to sink in, then asked them, 'Would you like to try this right now?'

"They all nodded, and for the next ten to fifteen minutes we sat in a circle on the bridge in silence, listening only to the wind rustling the leaves and the water rushing below, feeling the spirit within us move. There was a warmth and a peace there beyond understanding."

Roland said he recounted this story to his Teaching Mission group the following Monday. Some of the members were disturbed, even offended, by the apparent psychic nature of the knowledge that Roland had exhibited. Roland decided that he had merely been used as a vehicle to open up a group of people to spiritual instruction. He reasoned that Jesus had known where a donkey was tied to a tree and had sent two of his apostles to borrow it, and if Jesus used the spirit's ability to see things beyond normal vision, why wouldn't these spirits give him the same ability when doing the Father's work?

It was a brilliant celestial move—so effective, thought Vincent. And he knew these types of things were going on all over the world at all times. These were the tools of the Correcting Time.



After seeing the fearful reaction of some of the students to Roland's recent experience, the teachers thought that they should again speak to this issue. They wanted everyone to understand the breadth of the assistance that was being given to this planet. They didn't want anyone to think that it was limited to people cognizant of the teachers or the Teaching Mission.

"Certainly you should understand how important it is for you, as a minister of Michael, to be aware of the touchingly diverse manner in which his gospel and the truth are portrayed. We are not proud, and neither should you be in attempting to find commonality with ministers clothed in different attire.

"Consider the fact that each viewpoint has a distinct pattern which is the most appropriate for its comprehension and appreciation. Be aware that you, while having the purpose of heart to go forth and serve your Father, may still find that your manner and

method will not reach some ears, and you may be amazed that someone else with a different perspective will touch the hearts you cannot reach.

"It is important that seekers of all faiths realize that they are as important as the highest person they perceive, and that the lowest person they perceive is as important as they are.

"This is tantamount to fostering increasing unity among the diverse interpretations of religious inspiration and spiritual philosophy.

"Each group should recognize the level of their ritual, the limitation of their form, and increasingly stretch beyond those boundaries. It is not the form which we applaud, whether it be books, motions, symbols, or rocks. It is the thread of expression which we would hopefully inspire you to reveal.

"Carry these perspectives forth. Recognize the importance of your actions. But equally recognize the importance of all action of a sincere nature. Applaud more the one who tries than the one who rests in achievement, for thereby will they strive ever more to bring forth the light of truth upon themselves and offer it freely to all others who would look their way."

Vincent had been extremely busy in his work. He normally had a busy year end, but 1995 had been especially hectic. With that, and with all the trouble he had experienced lately staying focused on the spiritual aspects of his life, he wondered if this planet was indeed in the midst of an upliftment. It was easy to have doubt creep in, what with the over-materialistic Christmas season and a couple of trips to the mall. Although he never completely doubted, he did have seasons in which he would openly question whether he and Roland were just deluded. And this was his frame of mind when he received a call from Roland.

"Roland! What's the occasion?" Vincent knew that whenever Roland called him at the office, something was up.

"Guess where I am," said Roland.

"Is this a rhetorical question or am I really supposed to venture a guess?"

"Palm Springs," Roland replied, ignoring the sarcasm. "I'm in the middle of a miracle of sorts."

"Do tell."

"Well, I was sitting at home on December 23 when suddenly I received a message from Amster, my personal celestial teacher, telling me that I was needed in the desert immediately. I was surprised, but I gathered up a few things, hopped into my car and away I went."

Vincent chuckled, thinking that only Roland would do something like this!

"That night," continued Roland, "about halfway to Palm Springs, I took a room at a Motel 6. I was lying on the bed looking at the sparsely decorated room, thinking of the Christmas parties and celebrations I was missing, and asking myself, what am I doing? Here I was, in the middle of nowhere on my way to who-knows-where. I had to question my sanity.

"About that time I received another message from Amster. She said, 'Remember, you have already eaten the fruit and tasted the wine of this feast laid out before you, and the hosts of Heaven go before you to prepare the way.' I smiled and drifted off to sleep. Still, I had to wonder what was so important for me to be sent into the desert during the Christmas holiday.

"Gurumayi, an Indian woman believed to be an enlightened teacher by her followers, was leading a meditation conference in Palm Springs at this time. In fact, I saw her briefly near the elevator and she gave me a piercing look. It was as if I received her God-consciousness in that moment. I think they call it 'Shaktipot.' I was amazed, and even more so when I sat down and a couple of sparrows landed on my table. One of the guru's disciples saw this and came over to talk to me, saying, 'I saw the sparrows land on your table. I have seen this only one other time, at the Siddha Yoga center in New York, where birds landed on a table where Gurumayi was sitting.' I spent some time talking to the disciple, who told me he had been at the guru's ashram for over eight years.

"But even more amazing, I met two women who have a story you will find so interesting that I'm going to put one of them on to tell you about it." Roland handed the phone over.

"Hello, Vincent," said a friendly female voice.

"Uh, hello," Vincent answered back.

"Roland tells me that you are his spiritual brother in Florida." After exchanging telephone introductions and acknowledging Roland's apparent insanity and concomitant joy, the woman asked, "Do you have a few minutes to spare?"

"Sure," said Vincent, eager to hear a new story.

"It was the spring of 1971. I was 25 years old, divorced, alone with three small children, attending college, confused and searching for something. I had rejected all religion and the idea of God.

To me the universe was all a cosmic accident and I was having a hard time finding the meaning in life. Then I met a young man named Will Sherwood in a chemistry class. He showed me this big Urantia Book. Since I had already let him know that I had thrown God out, Will was smart enough to open it up to a page that described the physical aspects of the local universe. That got my attention—got me rather excited, actually. By the time I looked at the front of the book and started reading about the nature of God, I was willing to be more open-minded.

“A light came into my mind as I read, and I and began to understand the design and purpose behind this physical universe. Then I had the most profound spiritual experience of my life.

“It happened one night. I was up late reading page 364, “The Eternal and Divine Purpose,” and page 1100, “Marks of Religious Living.” It was about 11:30 p.m., the children had been put to bed hours before and it was very quiet in the house. I sat on the couch deep in revelation and study, my heart and mind so filled and lifted with the joy of knowing that I was safe and secure, at home and going home in a universe where I no longer felt alone.

“Suddenly an energy began moving into the room. It twinkled and vibrated and brought with it the most intense feeling of joy. It moved into my physical body from the feet up and exploded into my heart and head with the most complete sense of love and well-being I have ever known. The world disappeared. There was only this love, replete and complete. When I awoke the next morning, the world had returned to normal but it was a different world, seen through the eyes of a consciousness so suffused with love and joy that everything I saw was absolutely perfect. My life was instantly transformed. The crooked path was made straight. Everything worked effortlessly. Things fell into place. There was no struggle, no resistance in anything I attempted. My assessment of situations and the solutions I arrived at seemed to present themselves easily, and win-win was the outcome of every encounter I had with everyone and everything that touched my life. I experienced a rebirth in consciousness between the pages of the Urantia Book, and this was responsible for my return to spirit.

“I lived this life for two weeks. Then one morning I awoke and it was gone. Where was my joyous perception? I reached for

the Urantia Book and returned to the pages I had been reading the night the light exploded within me, but I could not recreate my experience. My life returned to the ache and the struggle of the young woman I was. The study group I was working with broke up and I found myself wondering what my experience with this material was really all about. I became deeply depressed. The events that came into my life altered my course and I closed the book and put it on the shelf. I have pursued many paths over the years, all of them resonating with the message that first pierced my heart so many years ago. I have periodically picked up the Urantia Book through the years and wondered. . . .

“Fast forward to December, two weeks before Christmas. This past year enormous changes have rocked my life and once again my perceptions have been seriously challenged. As I sifted and sorted through the lessons my life has taught me, my thoughts turned once again to that two-week experience I had twenty-four years ago with the Urantia Book. I entertained the possibility of finding a study group to connect with in New Mexico, where I live. I was curious to find out how this material had impacted the consciousness of the planet.

“Then my friend Sharon invited me to travel to Palm Springs, to spend Christmas and attend the winter retreat of her Siddha Yoga group. Although not a devotee, I was thrilled to be in the presence of this teacher and the thousands of people who came to spend the holidays with her.

“At 5:30 on Christmas morning, about a thousand people gathered to chant the Guru Gita, a devotional rendition in ancient Sanskrit describing the earthly sojourn, the light of salvation and the role of the Guru. It was a long chant. I followed along as best I could but, growing tired, I closed my eyes and let the energy field of sound carry me within. After about ten minutes I had a vision. It did not just flash in and out like other psychic impressions I’ve had, but seemed to hang there in the clear space of my inner eye. A man appeared before me. I looked into his eyes and then began to study him carefully. He looked to be about five-foot-ten and between fifty-five and sixty years of age, with light brown curly hair and a beard streaked with grey. He wore a dark jacket and slacks, and a white shirt. He was holding a big book in his hands

and extending it out to me. I looked back into his eyes. Somehow this man seemed familiar to me even though I had never seen him before. Then ‘poof!’ and he was gone. I sat there in the meditation hall, in the dim light of early morning with the sound of the Guru Gita filling my ears. What was this all about? I wondered. . . .

“The chanting concluded. We went to the breakfast hall. I turned to Sharon and told her about the man I saw in my vision. I was describing him when I noticed someone passing by. ‘He kind of looked like that guy right there,’ I said. The man stopped, turned around and came back to our table. He asked if he could join us, and I said yes because he seemed strangely familiar. He sat down and introductions followed. It was Roland.

“Roland told us that he was an admirer of the Guru and supportive of Siddha Yoga, but not a follower. He was here because he had received inner guidance two days before that he should come to this place at this time. He went on to say that the spiritual group he had been working with for a number of years was a Urantia Book study group. I practically fell off of my seat. I reached out and grabbed his arm. I was looking at the man I had seen in my vision.

“‘Excuse me,’ I blurted out, ‘I know what our connection is. I was sent here too. I saw a man in a vision this morning during the meditation.’ As I described the vision to the man sitting beside me, I realized they were one and the same man. We just sat there, amazed, staring at each other.

“God works in mysterious ways. I told Roland of my spiritual awakening through the material presented in the Urantia Book many years ago and my recent interest in reconnecting with a group of readers. I have just experienced the second most profound experience of my life and it is directly linked to the first. The opportunity has returned at a time in my life when I am being challenged to live by faith and trust in the benevolent love of the Father. Twenty-four years ago I was graced by perfect vision. I was gifted with an experience that forever marked my life. I never forgot it, and it appears that God would love to have me back in his kingdom once again. I now know I am being offered grace in every moment. Only this time I am being asked to con-

sciously remember, rejoin, to put back the kingdom by choosing to see God and nothing else."

Vincent had goosebumps when she finished talking. Roland got back on the phone.

"Not only that," Roland noted, "her friend, upon finding out that I meditate at 3 a.m. each morning and then go back to bed, told me that she does the same thing and that when she is up, she gets on the computer and types up whatever comes to mind. Then when she gets up the next morning she reads what she has written and wonders where it all came from. That's when I told them about the Teaching Mission. As you can see, I'm in the middle of some sort of synchronistic event. Do me a favor," he added, "and send them a copy of some of the transcripts and a copy of our newsletter."

Vincent laughed and agreed to do so. He immediately wrote a letter to Roland's new friends, commenting on how he looked forward to these types of happenings and how much he anticipated eventually meeting them, and mailed it out right away along with the transcripts.



Machiventa Melchizedek called the teachers' meeting to order, "Quiet, please. Let's get this meeting started, as we are pressed for time."

"In the early days of the mission there were only a few teachers. Today there are thousands. New volunteers are pouring into the area to lend a hand in the upliftment. All manner of celestial personalities are now present on the planet as the mission progresses and accelerates."

The teachers were all aware of the increase in these spiritual personality presences and were always excited about their meetings with Machiventa, as they expected the unexpected.

Machiventa continued: "I have heard some of your speculations on the future of this mission. It is hard not to conjecture when you witness the arrival of large contingents of various orders of beings. You know of the growing number of teachers within your own ranks. You also know that since the adjudication of the

Lucifer rebellion and the reconnection of the universe circuits, there has been an increase in the help made available to the quarantined planets.

"There is a reason for this acceleration. Initially we sought a few people to participate in this mission and we located them. These people have been under instruction for some time now in preparation for a more active ministry on their part. However, this small band of seekers is not enough for the vast population on this planet. We have therefore expanded our outreach so that a celestial personality is available for each and every person on this planet who shows even the slightest interest. We will not be limited to those who are actively searching or who are interested in one religion or another. We will be present at every opportunity to encourage anybody. This mission is expanding rapidly and we must be prepared to minister to all of God's children. There can be no mass upliftment unless the general public is involved. Let's keep that in mind. We are to be tolerant of all paths and we must be ready to approach each person from their own perspective, their own idea of what is true. From that viewpoint we will then add whatever we can to expand their perception of truth.

"Folks, this is an interactive mission. Stay on the lookout for opportunities. We have a lot of help. And we are on a mission of extreme importance. The people of this planet have been subjected to a quarantine for deeds not of their doing. They feel the repercussions of the rebellion, the Adamic default, and life without direct contact with the celestial administration. It is true that this world is in chaos, but it is the bestowal planet of the Creator Son of this universe and, as such, is destined to become the jewel of the universe. We are now privileged to be assisting in this upliftment. It will take time, but we shall not fail.

"Now go forth and do your best to facilitate this mission. Remind your students to be examples for the light of truth, beauty and goodness."

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That night Vincent received another call from Roland.

"Hey, Vincent! Ready for part two?"

"You bet!" Vincent replied.

"I had lunch with Sharon and told her that you were sending them some material. She looked surprised and then asked me what you looked like. I gave her a short description—tall, bearded, greying. Then she asked me if you were, by chance, a lawyer! I said, 'Matter of fact, he is. Why do you ask?' She explained that several months ago she visited a psychic who accurately described what had happened to her throughout her life, then predicted that in the near future an attorney would send her a package that would help her on her spiritual path."

Roland laughed. So did Vincent, albeit rather incredulously. Whenever Vincent began to wonder if this spiritual upliftment was really in full swing or if he was just deluded, something like this would happen. He marveled at how perfectly celestial forces arranged for coincidences between strangers, interweaving them to make the drama of life so mysteriously beautiful.



There were times when Vincent had an intuitive sense that things would work out for the best, like during the birth of his first child. Riley was born prematurely with his umbilical cord

wrapped around his neck, and was blue in the face when he arrived. He was immediately put into an incubator and monitored around the clock. Vincent never left his side. He learned how to read all the monitors that were hooked up to him, and when the doctors called to check on Riley they would ask for Vincent, who would advise them of the latest readings and what had happened since the last call. The doctor who delivered the baby was distraught, and Vincent had to tell him to get a grip on himself. When a doctor friend of theirs stopped by to visit Lucy in the hospital and heard Vincent reassure her that all would be well, he winced because of the seriousness of Riley's condition. This got him a lecture from Vincent about faith and good vibes. The attending doctors even debated flying the baby to another hospital, but throughout it all Vincent was confident. And he was proven right. Riley recovered and had no repercussions from his stormy first days.

The Urantia Book states that people have untapped abilities, included what it calls "intuition." These powers, according to the book, will be developed in future years and are utilized to some extent by almost everyone on the planet, even today. While Vincent would often refer to himself as "insensitive" to such abilities, there *were* times



Vincent sat in his office pondering several weighty questions. First, as usual, he wondered what he could be doing to better advance Michael's plan for this planet. He knew that planetary transformation would take many hundreds, if not thousands, of years, so he rightly surmised that whatever he did would be just a small piece in a much larger puzzle. Still, he wanted to be as helpful as possible while he was here.

Secondly, he wondered if being a lawyer was what he was supposed to be doing. After all, practicing law was, for the most part, just pushing paper around. He knew that very little of what he did at work would have any spiritual significance when he looked back on it. But it did provide an income, and raising his family was important to him and *did* have spiritual significance—at least from his

perspective. This was backed up by the *Urantia Book*, which taught that those who had been unable to have children or raise a family in their mortal life would be required to do so on the mansion worlds. As it turns out, raising children is one of the most important educational experiences people can have on this planet. Work also played its part, but Vincent continued to wonder if his particular vocation was what would be most valuable.

Pondering this, he was inspired to look through some of the teacher transcripts he carried around in his briefcase:

“I wish to speak to you briefly about a most important topic: work. It is common for mortal beings on their planet of origin to consider work an ordeal—an unpleasant task or set of tasks devoid of reward in the sense of inner gratification. However, work is a large part of your purpose on this material world. I am not referring specifically to the duties you perform for your wages; rather, I mean the way in which you, as a God-seeking mortal being, strive each day with every act you undertake to fulfill the Father’s will.

“It matters not what your chosen occupation may be, but rather that you carry out your duties with love, truth, goodness and beauty as your goals, striving to do what you do as well as you possibly can.

“There is no menial work. If you truly perform your work on this planet according to these principles, you will do much to further the Father’s cause in the goals of this Teaching Mission. You must remember that in everything you do, you are observed by others. It may not be the currently fashionable thing to do, but let me assure you that as a diligent, honest, caring, considerate worker who strives for excellence, you will set an example that will inspire your brethren to courageously imitate your actions.

“You see, my friends, following the Father’s will is not a matter of gestures, rituals, publications, promises, or isolated acts without continuity; God-seeking, worshipful beings understand that it is truly a matter of how you live your life. Do you live as an animal, seeking only food, shelter, reproductive opportunity, rest and comfort? Or do you go beyond that level and strive, work and endeavor to always excel? The answer is up to you, my friends. I commend you for the work you have done thus far that has led

you here. Be aware of the importance of each act you undertake. The Father sends His love to all. I bid you farewell.”



Vincent paced the bridge, deep in thought. He understood that everyone was where they were supposed to be. He could accept that things would unfold in good time. He still had to wonder, though, *what* was unfolding. After all, he had been where he was supposed to be when he knew nothing about the Urantia Book or the Teaching Mission. He had to wonder why his path had crossed with the Urantia Book when it had.

He also thought about the Teaching Mission. Why had it appeared in his life? What was the training designed to prepare him for? What did all this mean? Was it any wonder that he walked the bridge talking to God about all this? Meanwhile, he realized that while he was on this planet but a short time, the planet's rehabilitation would take many, many years. He would only be a bit player, on his own path toward Paradise. Still, he stopped and pledged to Michael that whatever he could do to assist, he would certainly do. He was committed. But he wasn't sure what he was committing himself to do.

He had to be patient.



Vincent had continued writing his newspaper column, but his agreement was for only seven articles, and the one he had just written was to be his last. In his previous articles he had been somewhat cautious, so on this one he decided to step out, to convey the notion that something was happening.

NEW YEAR BRINGS A BEAUTIFUL SEASON OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

It is more than the beginning of a new calendar year. We are in the initial phases of a spiritual upliftment, an enlightenment, a new dawn.

This spiritual awakening will be seen everywhere for those who will take the time to look. It will be evidenced by the sweetness in the air, the smile on a baby's face, those small acts of kindness that we do for each other.

God will be known as a loving parent to all of us, not as a vengeful and angry deity. People will come to the understanding that love is the currency of the universe, and unselfish service the fruit of the spirit. We will realize that we are children of this loving God and therefore spiritual brothers and sisters.

We will operate from a different perspective. We will connect with others through the heart. We will face adversities and problems without fear, knowing that all will work out for the best in the fullness of time. We will wake up and be thankful for another day and we will do the best we can to make the most out of the time allotted us.

More and more the people of this planet will have a personal relationship with God, each spending time every day talking to God and listening in silent meditation for God's response.

We will listen to those we encounter and we will either learn from them or offer them something to take with them. We will not emphasize the differences between each of our paths or beliefs, but will be tolerant, understanding that there are many paths to God and we are not in a position to judge another's path.

This new dawn will not arrive magically or by celestial fiat, although we will have the assistance of angels in the process. We must each participate in the unfoldment of this beautiful time. This change will occur first with you and me and then will spread out one person at a time until the tapestry of love and kindness covers this world.

My prayer for this year is that each of us recognizes the changes that are in store for this world and that we each do our part daily to accelerate this world into Light and Life. The time we have all been waiting for is here.

If not now, then when will we be about God's work?

At the trampoline service that Sunday, Vincent, Riley and Katie sat in a semi-circle as they shuffled through the books they had brought with them for “revelation roulette.” Once a book was chosen, either Riley or Katie would select a page at random and begin reading. After the particular passage was read, they would discuss it for a while and then the other child would pick a page. This would go on for around half an hour until they had exhausted either the books or their patience.

Vincent sometimes wondered if the discussions had made any impact on the children, but he was often rewarded with the answer when he heard them retelling some of the stories to their friends or to Lucy. If nothing else, it was a good opportunity for them to spend time together outdoors every week.



On a typical planet, a Planetary Prince and his staff come to teach the rudiments of civilization to the population, followed by an Adam and Eve who initiate the genetic upstepping by propagating children who eventually mate with the native population. Thereafter a Magisterial Son arrives accompanied by a team of celestial beings to begin a major spiritual educational mission. The Magisterial Son materializes in human form, as do the Melchizedeks who serve the planet, and they stay from 25,000 to 50,000 years. By the

time their work is done and they leave, the planet is generally well on its way to the ages of Light and Life.

Vincent was intrigued. To him it made perfect sense. This planet had been ravaged after its Planetary Prince joined the Lucifer Rebellion and further harmed by the default of its assigned Adam and Eve. And though it had hosted the Creator Son of the universe in the form of Jesus some two thousand years ago, it was still a backward world. The delivery of the Urantia Book provided the inhabitants with much-needed information, but it was only intended to be the first in a series of continuing revelations. The Teaching Mission seemed to be the second phase, which would prepare the population for the next step. Now that the adjudication of Lucifer was complete and the circuits and universe broadcasts were being reinstated, could anyone seriously doubt that something big was about to occur?

Add to this the fact that whenever a Creator Son materializes on a planet, it becomes a special planet to him. Vincent could certainly see that something unusual might be in store for this lowly planet, and the possibilities excited him.

He knew that a human, whose lifespan is a mere blink of an eye from a cosmic perspective, views time differently than a celestial would. The Urantia Book stated that the adjudication of Lucifer, a process that stretched out over almost two thousand Earth years, was, from the celestial perspective, almost instantaneous. It was not a question of *if* but *when* a Magisterial Son would arrive because all planets were destined to be host to such a visitation. He wondered if he would still be alive when the big Magisterial event occurred or if maybe he was to be a part of the advance guard. He also asked himself again if he was suffering from self-aggrandizement. He assumed that he was, but continued to feel that he was indeed in the midst of something extraordinary that should be pursued, no matter what the motive.

Vincent was also aware that whatever their religious persuasion or spiritual philosophy, humans all wanted verification of celestial realities, thus the desire for outward manifestations such as miracles—or what humans considered miracles—and predictions.

The other aspect of this business that intrigued Vincent was people's willingness to surrender their free will in favor of the secu-

city of a set path. He first glimpsed this when he was growing up in the Catholic religion. It seemed to him that the church encouraged people to believe that if they attended services on Sunday and participated in regular confession, they were doing everything necessary to go to heaven when they died. With that teaching in mind, Vincent began to understand why there was such chaos trying to get out of the parking lot after church—the goodwill didn't have to extend beyond the church door, let alone to life in general. Later he recognized that this wasn't really the teaching of the church. Nevertheless, he found many were allowing others to make spiritual decisions for them, which led to the development of cults and organizations with strong charismatic leaders.



On March 10, 1996, Paula, a visitor to the Tallahassee group, was surprised and delighted to be in attendance when the first mention of a future Magisterial mission was transmitted by Manutia Melchizedek:

"The light of the Father filters down upon this world through the open hearts of His children, reaching out to those that stand yet in darkness. The love of the Father enfolds us each, as he holds us gently in His arms. The power of the Father upholds us through all the adversities of life; ever is He at our side. Wherever we gather, He is. Greetings children, I am Manutia Melchizedek. I greet you this evening with much love. I come here in part in response to the question within your hearts. This world you live upon is indeed in the midst of change . . . the administrators, those on high, within whose care the guidance of world affairs has been given, have begun a program, under Michael's guidance, that will culminate in sweeping changes upon this world. You who are committed to walking with Him will be the first to be given an awareness of those who walk among you. Indeed there are already those who have been sent as the vanguard. Your faith has kept you true to this path and for this many praises have been sung in your name. For unto you has been given the task of opening the way to a broader acceptance of celestial intervention. We give no timetable for already have you understood that due to

human nature and human free will, this is not possible. Yet I say unto you this evening, keep your eyes open, your ears as well, and open to the guidance you receive from your own inner spirits; accept the possibility that indeed within your lifetime this will come to pass. A Magisterial Son has been mandated for this world in the near future. Praise be to the Father on high! For now you begin the long struggle from the dark into the fullness of day. Blessings on you children, for your faith, your perseverance, indeed for your open and loving hearts. I leave you now with my blessings and the sure knowledge that the love of the Father is indeed upon each of you.

“Shalom”



Vincent called Roland on the phone to discuss the predicted arrival of a Magisterial Son. Roland, while not specifically denying the possibility, protested vehemently about the effect that such a rumor could have on people.

“Vincent, this is the kind of thing that everyone wants to have happen so that they can stop striving in their everyday lives to further the light of God! In my view, our objective is to live our lives and make each decision in line with the will of God, and if we think we are about to have a materialized celestial teacher, then we tend to become slackers and figure that it won’t matter what we do from day to day. This is a dangerous notion and one that should be discouraged.

“If and when a Magisterial Son arrives, that is the day to worry about how we will deal with him and his staff. Until then, aren’t we all responsible for our own paths? Aren’t we all to be examples of tolerant and loving brothers and sisters? I pray I can be that example, and when I can’t, I will ask to exchange my mind for the mind of Christ.”

Vincent agreed, but he still loved to consider the possibility of a Magisterial Son appearing in material form.

After they hung up, Vincent rededicated himself to stilling his mind so that he could attune himself to the soft words of the

teachers and his indwelling fragment of God. But, as usual, he was only partially successful. It was a difficult time for him. He didn't feel that he was progressing. He was a little depressed about it all and would have been happier to see some immediate action.

He sighed and headed for bed.

Lately Vincent had noticed that little synchronicities were happening to him. He would think of someone and, not long after, they would call. He would meet people who said something to him that was just what he needed to hear at that time. It was a lot of little things, but he was paying attention.

One weekend Vincent and his family were at the beach at Cape San Blas. He had been very busy at work all week and had even brought work with him, although he brought it mainly to satisfy his work ethic—he didn't really intend to do any of it. And he didn't. But he did sit around and contemplate the spiritual landscape. He reflected on his past few years and whether he had correctly perceived the reality of celestial assistance in the world. Perhaps this was all a fantasy shared by a group of hopeful people. Sure, it was loving and promoted a dedication to God, but could there really be a spiritual upliftment in progress? Could the angels really be working with everyone to lead them to a higher understanding? He mulled this over as he walked to the store to buy a paper.

The store had only one newspaper left and it was from Panama City, located fifty miles to the west in the Florida panhandle. Since he was only planning to read the sports and comics, he bought it anyway, and when he got home and stretched out to read it, he was surprised by what he saw. In the business section was an article quoting a man named Guy Garrett:

"I was sitting on my front porch and I had my Bible open to Psalm 46:10, which says, 'Be still and know that I am God.' I began to sense that there were words beginning to form in my heart and I felt very, very strong impressions that I was to write them down. I went to my dining room table and as I began to write, the words just flowed out. I didn't stop or pause or think or anything. That message came from the spirit of the Lord.

Vincent sat up and called to Lucy. "You won't believe this!"

The article then described a portion of what Mr. Garrett had written down.

"In My stillness there is peace. In My presence is the fullness of your joy. My presence will restore you. When you know that, all doubts, fears and anxieties bow their head to My name and are dissipated by My presence. When you truly know who I am and what I am, you will never fear again."

Vincent chuckled. Just when he was again wondering if there was a worldwide spiritual consciousness, he reads an article about a Bible reader who gets a spiritual lesson on the stillness. He looked up and said, "Okay, I see that you celestials are hard at work. It is nice to have some evidence of it once in a while, though!"

He walked over to the hammock and crawled in. With the surf crashing in the background, he drifted off into a well-deserved nap.



Vincent had a theory about world peace. He believed that when the communications systems transcended political boundaries, as they were beginning to do, it would be more and more difficult for those in control to lie to the people. He believed that misinformation and isolation were the cause of much of the hatred and misunderstandings between people, that it was only a matter of time before the mass communications systems would disenfranchise the tyrants and despots. After all, it was difficult to

keep satellite dishes off of the roofs of the houses of the world. And that would be the first step toward peace.

Then there was the Internet, an important tool for the spread of the good news of Michael's activities to salvage this planet. People from all over were reporting that they, too, had been contacted to assist in the Teaching Mission. Many individuals, otherwise isolated, were emboldened to speak up about what they had experienced. And there was an incredible diversity among those who were reporting these events. Professionals, laborers, common folk, wealthy types, people of all races, genders and religious denominations. It was a worldwide phenomenon, although it was still not generally recognized. Many who were aware of it were afraid, declaring it to be of Satan, a mass delusion, a vehicle for self-aggrandizement. But despite the condemnation, the Teaching Mission continued to grow. More and more people were drawn to the loving message; more and more people committed themselves to personal transformation, to prayer and to worship—to seeking God in the stillness on a daily basis.

The momentum continued. The upliftment was in full swing.



At the meeting the next week the group had a visitor, a mid-wayer who had the following words for the assembled participants regarding the allocation of time:

"Here is the framework we propose for prioritizing the application of our teachings: (1) communion with the heavenly Father; (2) devotion to family; (3) application of our teachings in your daily interaction with Earth brothers and sisters; (4) ordinary maintenance of material concerns. It is not about the hours spent—some of these exercises may take only minutes—it is about the quality of their application. You will soon see that God's work can become quite time-consuming; indeed, it is intended to become ultimately all-consuming.

"We realize that this thought might be disturbing to many, especially those who have accumulated substantial material wealth. It takes much effort to maintain such extravagance and hard work to buy fancy possessions. If you find that having these goods ben-

efits your lives, then by all means continue; if not, jettison them. There are better uses for your time—even if you spend it doing nothing more than watching the clouds sail across the sky. Materialism is a deadly trap, in which many are caught, and the most pitiful victims are those clamoring to be let into the trap.

“We do not ask you to withdraw from the world, as the monastic orders do, for that is the opposite of our intent. You already know the tenor of our instructions. I mention this because your teacher, Will, has referred to an upcoming exercise, which will be an expansion of the work you have already begun. What we raise now, as an idea, is the notion that you must look forward to converting your daily activities from sweat-of-the-brow labors into opportunities to put the Father’s love into action.

“We will together subvert the exploitation of men, and use the existing structure to begin building a just and loving brotherhood. We specifically will not ‘plow it all under, and replant,’ as has been frequently suggested. Things do not work that way in the divine scheme of development. To do so would undermine the value of what has gone before, and this is not God’s way. We will use the mechanisms that are already in existence, for the greater glory of God. This method of pursuit is far less disturbing both to those intimately concerned with and to those insensitive to the subtle movements of the Father. He is clever; He is resourceful; He will attract humans to Him by all honorable means. Even we teachers are overtaken by the repercussions of His actions. We admire Him and worship Him.

“By service, then, one to the other, shall you show your love and respect for the Father. Because of your simple dedication to loving service, you are on the high road—even the highest. What you do not understand at this time may be unnecessary for you. You should never feel incompetent because your grasp of the teachings of the Urantia Book is not equal to another’s. Much of the material in the Urantia Book is basic information to help people of your world better gauge the scope of God’s plan. Previous to the Urantia revelation, the teachings about the passage from Earth to Paradise were beautiful but shallow. Believers expected to be resurrected within the “pearly gates,” but as you have learned, the road to heaven stretches across infinity itself. There are many way

stations, each a place to learn something new. You must learn all there is to learn, else on that day when you stand in the Father's personal presence you would be just as unaware of its import as you are today. I see that you are on that road, and it pleases me.

"You already have glimpsed the rewards of the journey. They are enough in themselves to justify the effort. We welcome your company and the example you are setting.

"Join arms with your brothers and sisters and walk on the highest path, the path with the most love in it."

"Reticular."

"What?" Vincent had picked up his private line at work only to be greeted by this single word. He recognized that it was Roland, who had been on the road again, to SpiritFest '95, the second annual Teaching Mission gathering on the California coast, and was probably home by now. In fact, Vincent had wanted to accompany Roland on this trip but was unable to for work-related reasons.

"Reticular," said Roland again. "Have you ever bought a car only to see that same car, same color everywhere you go?"

Vincent sighed. "Yes, but what does that have to do with anything?"

"Well," explained Roland, "that focus is reticular behavior. You recognize it because you are involved with it. It is like a network of same-color-car owners who are acutely aware of each other."

"So, did you buy a new car?" Vincent asked sarcastically.

"No," replied Roland laughing, "but when we have decided that we are teachers for God, our reticular activity is looking for people who are open and ready to hear His message. We are engaged in reticular behavior. We get in the flow and, as you know, when we do, strange and wonderful things happen."

"Ah, stories from the road! So, tell me all about your latest adventures."

"Well," said Roland, "Right after I arrived at the conference in Big Sur, I took off with our old friend Byron to go walking in the hills above the beach. After a while we got hungry and ate at a small restaurant on the beach where I ordered a bottle of Reisling wine and a lemon. We hadn't made any overnight plans, so when it grew dark Byron and I found lodging nearby.

"The caretakers of our motel, we learned, had recently moved back to California from Taos, New Mexico, where they had gone to follow what they believed was their spiritual path. On one of the walls was a huge spiritual mural, and when the woman confided that she had painted it with celestial assistance, Byron and I looked at each other and smiled. This was our opening, so we casually informed the couple about the Correcting Time and what was happening on the planet. They were so ready to hear it they immediately agreed to work for the spiritual upliftment of the planet and wanted to know all about the work of the celestials. Byron and I spent hours with them telling them what we knew, and we referred them to a study group that met weekly in San Luis Obispo.

"As we were leaving, I struck up a conversation with one of the maids, who told me that she had worked there for five years but today was her last day, that she was going to follow her own path. I told her about *my* journey, and before I knew it we were swapping phone numbers and addresses. She was very interested in my story because she was in search of a new spiritual path for herself.

"This spontaneous discovery of the spirit in others while on the road was all new to Byron, who has been more versed in the intellectual and literary aspects of the mission. When the couple asked us if we often went around like this, Byron told them that while it seemed to be *my* calling, it was a new experience for *him*."

Vincent and Roland both broke into laughter. This, thought Vincent, was the fun part of this mission. He only wished that he could have been there too, but he knew that he was where he needed to be at the time. Still. . . .

Just then they were interrupted by a client of Vincent's showing up unexpectedly, and Vincent had to cut off the stories. They agreed to continue the conversation later. Vincent felt he was

working too hard, and he was concerned that he was not carrying his weight in the mission. He longed to have synchronistic encounters too.

He didn't have to wait too long.



In the group meeting that Sunday, a visiting teacher was asked to give his personal insight into what the Teaching Mission was all about. The answer was instructive:

"To put this mission in perspective, these last few years were preceded by many years of preparation. When we first arrived, my fellow volunteer teachers and I came with excited minds and hearts ready to work in these troubled worlds of the rebellion and radiate the concept of beautiful and loving service, from whence our energy comes. One day you will understand this great joy.

"We were apprehensive but not fearful; the fear pervading this world did not survive with us, having been replaced by the joy of our knowing that we bask in the Father's light eternal. When we know from whence this energy comes, we can access it, as we teach you at your level of development, in the stillness.

"On this troubled world we knew we would find many people suffering, truly lost in the cruelty and struggles for power. We knew of the goodness deep inside each of you, for the Father Himself indwells you. And we asked our teachers, if we are to instruct humans to be teachers of these basic loving truths, will we first have to help them find balance of mind, body and spirit themselves? And the answer was yes.

"We thought, is it not truly amazing that we work with humans to heal their own troubled planet? For these troubles run so very deep. And is it not amazing to bring forth this co-weaving, this co-creating, this co-rehabilitating, this service together with these humans? Is that not an amazing part of Michael's plan? And all the teachers said, 'Yes, of course,' for Michael himself triumphed as a human, showing all the worlds the power that can come forth from mere humans. For these humans are so very special, the imbuelement of the Father inside each.

"So this effort to reclaim all of the planets of the rebellion is truly enthralling in its vastness. This mission will be accomplished in close association with the inhabitants themselves, who will do great wonders as teachers in the flesh through the mind and the spirit, in the manner of Christ Michael. An amazing experience this will be, we said. And they agreed, 'Yes.'

"This is truly a massive collaborative effort in which humans will triumph, working with us, through us, in the beautiful tapestry that you are making. You are golden threads. The threads themselves have little strength and so they must be interwoven, through your actions, through your service, your giving and sharing with your fellows, to produce this beautiful tapestry which will be strong enough for each of you to walk upon as we bring this world to Light and Life.

"We are so pleased to be a part of this mission, to have our eyes opened to the true potential of humankind. Through your mind, through your spirit, with the service of your body upon this planet, you can minister greatly to those with whom you come in contact. It is true that you are being trained to be teachers, to be healed, to be balanced, to know how to reach out and love someone. At times you amaze us. We share in your camaraderie. Many around you still see evil and anger and spirit poisons prevailing. You are becoming more enlightened. Your eyes have advanced beyond materiality into a morontial view in which you can see the deeper goodness, the deeper purpose, purity hidden beneath the fears and frustrations.

"You will bring this society from its base of fear to a base of love and goodness, and from there it will be built to reach the heavens.

"Peace to you and good night."

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Vincent was working late again. He had planned to go to a Urantia Book study group meeting that night, but couldn't get motivated. What he needed, he thought, was sleep. His family was in North Carolina visiting Lucy's parents, so he headed home for some peace and quiet.

On the way, though, Vincent decided to stop in at the gym for a quick workout. As he walked in the door he heard someone say, "There he is!"

He looked around and saw a lawyer friend of his pointing him out to a woman with blonde hair. Several months earlier in the locker room Vincent had shocked the same man when he casually mentioned he was reading the Urantia Book; the man then surprised Vincent by telling him that his wife, Pam, had been reading that book for twenty years. Now Vincent was about to meet her.

Pam enthusiastically introduced herself, and she and Vincent spent the next thirty minutes talking about their mutual interest in the Urantia Book. Pam also spoke of her tentative plans to move to Sedona to be with a group led by a man who had taken the name Gabriel of Sedona. Gabriel, who also used the Urantia Book as his textbook, had transmitted and published an "expanded" revelation. He preached that he was the only one in touch with celestial intelligences and that anyone who heard his call should move to Sedona and acknowledge his authority. Vincent had read Gabriel

of Sedona's books and their message didn't ring true with him. He couldn't imagine that you had to be in a particular place to do the will of the Father and, since Vincent was regularly involved in discussions with celestial personalities, he knew that they were working with everyone, not just the chosen few. He told Pam all this and, more importantly, about the Teaching Mission, and invited her to a meeting. Pam seemed interested. She told Vincent she'd been planning to attend a Urantia study group that very evening but felt led to come to the gym instead. Vincent smiled and asked her if she believed in coincidences. She did not.

Vincent loved this mission.



Roland called back to continue the story of his trek with Byron.

After their encounter with the people at the motel, Byron headed to the beach for some meditation, but not before giving Roland directions to a monastery and the name of a favorite restaurant of his that he insisted Roland visit on his journey up the California coast.

The monastery wasn't even on the map, so without Byron's help Roland would never have known it existed. But he found the beautiful old place high on a mountain ridge and, as it was open to the public, he stopped in for some meditation. After spending the whole morning there, he was hungry and went looking for the restaurant Byron had recommended.

The restaurant sat on a picturesque bluff overlooking the sheer coastal cliffs of Big Sur. On the back side, facing the vast Pacific Ocean, was an open area where deer roamed against a backdrop of rugged, forested terrain. Roland went inside, ordered a bottle of Reisling wine at the bar, poured himself a glass, and took it out to the observation deck, agreeing to inform the hostess when he was ready to be seated. Outside, as he sipped his wine, he made conversation with others on the deck.

He must have been acting suspiciously, because one man asked him if he worked for the CIA. Roland thought about it for

a moment, then replied, "Yes, I do work for the CIA—Christ in Action, that is!" Both he and his new friend had a good laugh about that. Afterwards, Roland was often heard telling people that he worked for the CIA.

After a while the hostess approached Roland to see whether he still intended to eat at the restaurant.

"Are you alone?" she asked him.

Roland was attracted to her willowy California-style beauty. "Yes," he replied, adding that he was content for the time being to sit outside and admire the scenery.

She left, but returned several times to check on him. When she eventually became insistent on knowing his intentions, he looked her in the eye and said, "I'm on a spiritual mission and I feel that I need to be *here* at this time." Her astonishment turned to excitement and she allowed her eyes to meet his and linger for a long moment before turning and going back inside. Roland smiled and continued relaxing on the terrace.

Whenever he felt like he was in the flow of the spirit, he would stop and get a sense of where he thought he should be. At this time, the deck of the restaurant felt just right to him.

Before long the hostess returned, this time to ask Roland what kind of a spiritual path he was on and what books he read on this path. He flashed her a smile and indicated that he was a faith son of God, that his mission was to go forth and spread love and light wherever he could. Books, he said, were merely a shadow of the truth that could only be found in the experiential walk on which he found himself. She pressed him, however, and he mentioned those that had rung true with him: the writings of Paramahansa Yogananda, *A Course in Miracles*, and the Urantia Book.

"I thought so!" she said. "You are the man I have prayed for."

Roland quickly answered, "Yes, I am. So what are you going to do with me?"

She told him what time she'd be getting off work and gave him a list of places where he could find lodging. Roland laughed and dutifully called around, but not one room was available. Upon hearing that, the hostess said, "Well, then you will have to stay with me in my cabin in the mountains."

Strange and wonderful things happen when two people meet as a result of their spiritual longings. The first is a gut feeling of purposeful excitement that an answer to long-held questions or desires is about to be answered or fulfilled—a destiny to be discovered. Second, the conversations, the non-verbal explorations and sweet observations confirm each person's initial knowing. The ego is no longer in control, and a feeling of spiritual orchestration pervades the mind.

Although Roland was dedicated to the mission, he was also interested in the opposite sex and, being single, was never reluctant to spend time with the women he met while on the road.

For the next week, in her cabin with no electricity high in the mountains of Big Sur, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Roland and his new friend enjoyed each other's company, partook of good food and wine, soaked up the California sun, sat beneath the blue moon, had intense conversations late into the night, loved each other, and slept in the joy of knowing that this had all been arranged by the angels. After the week was up, she threw the I Ching and, pressing Roland to pose a question, he asked, "Is Big Sur the place where I should settle down and make my base of operations?" He was surprised at the answer, as he had never before consulted the I Ching.

"The wild goose does not roost in a tree, but a clever wild goose can stand on a flat branch for a while."

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As the time grew near for the 1996 international Urantia Book conference in Flagstaff, Arizona, Vincent was thinking about the presentation he was slated to make. He was also tying loose ends at work so he could go without distraction. It was on such a day that he received a phone call from a strange woman. Busy as he was, Vincent was curious enough to pick up the phone.

"Hello!" said a cheerful voice. "My name is Judy. You don't know me, but I have a copy of your newspaper article about the coming spiritual upliftment. I have it hanging on my refrigerator. I'm putting together a street dance as a benefit for the homeless and I have a hunch that you will help me."

Vincent smiled. "You have the right man," he said. "I would love to help." He knew that this woman was unaware of his own involvement with the homeless, and he was happy that she'd called him. She invited him to a meeting that night, which was not possible for him, but he agreed to attend the next meeting scheduled for a date immediately prior to his departure for the conference. He penciled it into his calendar.



The celestials were getting ready for the conference as well. Many of the human participants planning to attend had communicated on the Internet but had never seen each other face to face.

There was tremendous opportunity for heart connections to be made, and the celestials were preparing to smooth the way.



Vincent called Roland to hear his latest stories and to coordinate their schedules for the conference. Roland had gotten an 800 number to encourage people to call him and had business cards printed up, reading, "Truth, Paradox, and Humor." When Vincent questioned Roland about his expertise in these areas, Roland replied, "No, no! I'm not an expert; I'm a seeker of truth through experience, an observer of paradox and, by the way, have you heard a good joke lately?" Vincent felt that Roland's description of his know-how was an apt one, and Roland did not disappoint him with his most recent story.

"Vincent, Vincent, Vincent!" Roland laughed. "I was at Byron's house, and while Byron was out one day I visited one of his friends, a long-time Urantia Book reader who happens to be a professional comedian. The man wanted a personal transmission from a celestial teacher, so I collaborated with Amster to accommodate him. Immediately the man wanted to know all about his material circumstances and whether he should make certain moves with respect to them. Amster, of course, refused to advise him in those areas, saying that she could only assist him in spiritual matters. Having been refused her counsel, the comedian jokingly told Amster that he wanted to speak to her supervisor. Without missing a beat, Amster said that would be fine, that her supervisor was resident within *him* and he should consult his indwelling Spirit for those types of decisions!"

Vincent laughed along with Roland and marveled at the ability of the teachers to wisely deal with such requests.

About that time Vincent was buzzed by his receptionist and advised of another call coming in, again from Judy, the woman he had agreed to help with the homeless benefit. Vincent told Roland to hold on a moment. He then conferenced in Judy so that all three of them were on the line together.

"Judy, I have you on the line with Roland, a good friend of mine."

"Hello Judy," Roland piped in, immediately going along with Vincent's game.

"Uh . . . hello to you, too," stammered Judy. "I don't want to interrupt your conversation, I just want to tell you, Vincent, that our meeting has been moved back a week."

"Sorry, Judy," said Vincent, "I won't be in town. In fact, I am discussing with Roland right now our plans for attending a conference together in Arizona."

"Yeah," said Roland, "we are just now talking about how to best spread the Father's love at this upcoming meeting of Urantia Book readers."

Vincent winced. He generally didn't mention the Urantia Book to people if he didn't know them very well.

"Did you say Urantia Book?" asked Judy incredulously. "I'm reading it now! And wait until you hear how I found it!"

Vincent was taken aback, but composed himself enough to say, "Everyone has a 'how-I-found-the Urantia-Book' story. We would love to hear your story, wouldn't we, Roland?"

"Of course!" Roland chimed in.

"Well," Judy began, "I was at a UFO conference and someone gave me a copy of the book. I took it home and tried to read it but really wasn't interested. I put it down for about a year. Then one day I picked it up again and it suddenly resonated within me. The next Sunday at my church I recognized the man who had given it to me, and I found that significant. You may know him. His name is Loren."

Vincent was floored, but he had begun to expect the unexpected. "Yes, I know Loren well," he chuckled, "He and I have been reading the Urantia Book together for years."

That set off a discussion between the three of them that went on for almost an hour. It ended with Vincent and Roland insisting that Judy come to the conference, promising to introduce her around and even take her to Sedona, to see the spiritual activities going on there. She said she would think about it. They learned that Judy had been through a fight with cancer and had survived, so they asked her to contact a friend of theirs who was just then battling cancer herself. Judy agreed to do so, thanked them for their spirited conversation, and hung

up.

There was a momentary silence, then Vincent spoke up. "What do you think that is all about?" he asked. Roland didn't have an immediate answer, but as with all these developments, they both agreed to keep an eye on the story as it unfolded.

Before Vincent left for the conference, since he hadn't heard anything from Judy, he called and left Roland's 800 number on her answering machine in case she had any other questions, then put her out of his mind. He got busy finalizing plans for the family vacation he and Lucy and the kids were planning to take together on a houseboat on Lake Powell before the conference.



At the daily meeting for the teachers, Machiventa addressed them.

"I know that each of you who has a student attending the upcoming conference is busy and that the rest of you continue to minister to your students, but today I want you to reflect on how they can perform their mission work while involved with their daily activities.

"Many students, especially those who are new to our conscious instruction, are so enthused with the prospect that they want to quit their jobs and shout the good news from the mountaintop. While I can understand the desire, the result will usually not help to spread the message effectively. Indeed, the belief that this work must be done somewhere other than where your student is at any given time is a fallacy. This work is to be done in every venue, in every job, in all circumstances. There is no one place to be. There is no particular occupation in which it is better to serve. When people begin to believe they should shirk life's duties to participate in this mercy ministry, then they have missed the point. Dodging their commitments is contrary to our teachings and the teachings of the Master. Remind your students that they must transform themselves and practice our lessons as they live their everyday lives. This is much more effective than preaching the good while avoiding personal obligations. Your students' lives will be the example upon which our teachings are to be built

and our message conveyed. Their responsibility is to live their lives in a way that will uplift this truth and show the fruits of our mission. Convey this to your students.

“That is all for today. My love and the love of the Father be with you.”

Vincent was concerned. He had given Pam a stack of Teaching Mission materials, including all the transcripts and the newsletters. She had seemed extremely interested, but recently had canceled a meeting with one of their group members to discuss her experiences and had also left a message on Vincent's voicemail that she would be dropping all of the material off to him. He hadn't had much time and wondered if perhaps he had come across as overly enthusiastic, that maybe he had gone overboard. He was annoyed with himself but justified his actions because she had told him she was leaving to move in with the Gabriel of Sedona group at the end of the month.

He went to the bridge to talk to the Father about it. "Father, I thought you had sent Pam to me in such a synchronistic way so I could teach her and lead her to a path of love and not of fear. Maybe that was one of the reasons, but I also see that I was to learn a lesson as well, and that lesson is one of patience and keeping my nose out of other people's business. I shouldn't have given Pam my critique of Gabriel's philosophy. I should let the truth that comes through your teachers crowd out the error of others and not attack the other's philosophy. I'm sorry for my misstep, but I had good intentions. I will try to do better in the future and I hope I have learned something."

With that, Vincent called the Mutt and pedaled for home.



Not only had Vincent given Pam his critique of Gabriel's writings, but he had posted it on the Internet. Knowing that his review would be challenged as a biased report, he liberally quoted verbatim portions of Gabriel's books so that Gabriel's own words would illustrate the positions Vincent wanted to highlight as questionable. He also scrupulously represented Gabriel's teachings, as found in his books, in an accurate fashion. He concluded his evaluation with the following remarks.

Although each of you can form your own opinions, I will tell you that this information did not ring true with me. I did not get the feel of a loving ministry but rather one of fear and adherence to human authority. I object to the notion that you have to be any specific place to find the will of God in your life. I reject the concept that you can only access celestial guidance through one human. This is merely a variation on the doctrine that you can only receive God's forgiveness by confessing sin to a priest, which I also reject. I also find the "chosen people" belief to be contrary to my conviction that none of us is anything other than a child of God (which is pretty darn good in and of itself but which confers no special status on us) and that God is no respecter of persons.

I perceive a great intolerance in the teachings of Gabriel of Sedona to any other path to God. He specifically teaches that there are no other paths to God except the one that goes through him. This type of intolerance is what is creating barriers between people and is part of the "chosen people" teaching. It does nothing to promote brotherhood and everything to separate people from each other. I do not countenance that philosophy and cannot support it. I also have real problems with the fire-and-brimstone preaching about God's personality and impending judgment, as well as the statement that God has already passed judgment on certain people still alive here. As far as I am concerned the universe is absolutely friendly to us and I act on that belief.

I support the belief that God is a loving God and we are his children, and thus brothers and sisters. I believe that love is the coin of the universe. I believe that what we do for the least of God's children, we do for God and Jesus. I believe that unselfish service is a fruit of the spirit. I believe that this planet is in the midst of a spiritual upliftment and that we are each called upon to demonstrate Jesus' teachings as we pass by. I believe that we are to be conduits for God's love. I believe that there are many paths to God. I believe that we can participate in this spiritual upliftment where we are without having to go any particular place. In fact, the transformations that we should see are within ourselves, then in our activities, and then, hopefully, people will see Jesus in our eyes and this world will change. I believe that we should each attempt to communicate with our indwelling fragment of God daily, through meditation and stillness practice, without a priest or third-party intervener. We indeed should have a personal relationship with God. We should each attempt to discern God's will in our lives and then have the faith and strength to do it.

I will not move to Sedona. That does not mean that I hate the people there. We are all on our own paths and I'm sure that they are fulfilled by where they are at this time. I wish them all well.



Vincent received a buzz from his receptionist: "Pam is on the line."

Vincent immediately picked up the phone, ready to apologize, but before he could, Pam began talking.

"Vincent, I want to thank you for your kindness in providing me this information. I have had all of it copied and I am returning the originals to you. I have sent a copy to my daughter who is also considering moving to Gabriel's Sedona community and I would like to come to your next Teaching Mission meeting so I can observe."

Vincent was thrilled and relieved, not only that he had not put her off but that she was keeping copies of the material. While she might still go to live in Sedona, at least she had been provided with

the whole perspective. He promised himself he would stop trying to persuade her to stay home using negative assertions about the Gabriel community but would let God take over instead. For all he knew, she may have been meant to follow her path right through the Sedona community. Who was he to say whether the experience in store for her there would not be the one that the Father intended her to have? He made up his mind to back off, and only supply her with additional information if she requested it.



After a long delay, representatives of the Gabriel community in Sedona had answered Vincent's Internet post, not disputing the statements quoted in Vincent's piece, but telling him that he couldn't understand their situation by reading a book, and in order to fairly judge their community he would have to come out and see it for himself. Vincent was going to be in the neighborhood anyway for the Flagstaff conference, so he emailed back, thanking them for the invitation and advising them that he would visit them when he was in town.

Vincent wondered why he had gotten himself involved in this, but felt that the request to visit their community was a reasonable one—one, in fact, that he had recommended to others when they were evaluating the Teaching Mission. He promised himself he would go, check it out and then get out of this business. It seemed to him that he was becoming negative, and he didn't like that.

He loved the old Mother Maybelle Carter song whose lyrics included:

*Keep on the sunny side
Always on the sunny side
Keep on the sunny side of life.
It will help you on your way
It will brighten up your day
If you keep on the sunny side of life.*



With his work completed, Vincent and his family set out on a vacation. They went to see the National Baseball League's Colorado Rockies and their new stadium, hiked in the mountains, went whitewater rafting on the Colorado River and floated for several days on Lake Powell in a houseboat. Vincent's family didn't care to attend the Urantia conference, so they arranged to leave him behind in Flagstaff and continue on to the Grand Canyon, to meet up later at a Neil Young concert in North Carolina to celebrate Vincent and Lucy's twenty-first wedding anniversary.

At the conference, before the family took off, Vincent and his kids walked around searching for a friend the kids had made after the Cheney conference. They learned, however, that the friend's parents hadn't registered and nobody had seen them. As they were leaving the facility, Loren, Vincent's old friend, ran up and excitedly told them that someone was looking for him.

"Who?" asked Vincent.

"Me!" said a stranger who suddenly appeared before him, throwing her arms around him.

"I'm Judy!"

Vincent stood there for a second, not comprehending. Judy . . . Judy . . . who was this? Then it hit him—this was the woman who was doing the homeless benefit back home! His eyes grew big and he exclaimed, “*Judy!* Is that really you? You made it! How?”

She grinned widely. “Yep, I’m here and I intend to hold you and Roland to your promise to take me to Sedona to check out the vortexes!”

Vincent was momentarily stunned but managed to introduce Judy to his children. He turned to Loren and said, “Please take Judy to meet Roland. He must be around here somewhere. I’ve got to take the children back.” To Judy he said, “I’ll see you tomorrow and I want to hear the entire story.”

“You got it!” Judy replied, then turned and went off with Loren. Vincent shook his head. Things were already starting to happen. The spirit was in motion. He smiled as they headed back to the car.



Machiventa again convened the teachers for their daily briefing.

“As you know, all people, when they make their first moral decision, receive a fragment of God that resides within their minds

from that day forward. Each person has a path in this life which they determine by their freewill choices. Irrespective of that, we often identify and prepare specific individuals for special projects or missions later in their lives, if they choose to undertake them. Many of those with whom we work have been in training unconsciously for years. This has nothing to do with their worthiness or spiritual advancement, and they are certainly not 'chosen people' in the traditional sense. Yet, we do have great hope that they will blossom and be helpful, especially at this stage in our mission.

"We usually attempt to open their eyes regarding their involvement with spiritual teachers by arranging to have them meet with those who already understand our program. A good example of this just occurred today with Judy. She has long been the subject of our efforts and has, within the last few years, been more and more inclined toward spiritual seeking. What with the conference and the presence of Vincent in her city, along with his buddy, Roland, we were able to connect them in such a way that she was amenable to investigating what was going on. We will watch as she receives a crash course this week. We believe that what would otherwise be too much too soon will be acceptable to her with the guidance of Roland and Vincent. Their antics should keep her comfortable, and their wisdom and example will assist her in understanding what is proposed. This is by no means a completed transaction; however, we are very pleased so far and have every reason to believe that it will be a successful awakening, that Judy will become a bright light in Michael's mission.

"Around this world are thousands of individuals with whom we have worked in anticipation of this time. They are also ready to blossom. If we can get enough people into the field, then we believe we can connect them with others ready to participate and thus accelerate this process. Stay alert to these possibilities, and if such an opportunity appears, let us know and we will provide all the support we can to facilitate a connection. That is all, except I would like to speak to Amster after the meeting. The rest of you, go with God."

Amster was lucky to have a student who was not only able to communicate with her relatively clearly but who was also capable

of leaving on a moment's notice for parts unknown when an opportunity arose. She often sent him on trips.

Machiventa drew close to Amster and put his arm around her. "Amster, Roland and Vincent are being called upon to facilitate Judy's spiritual awakening. They will overload her if they aren't careful, as they will be around many people who will assume that she is also up to speed on our program. Judy's long-veiled healing gifts will begin to manifest at this conference and this will further complicate matters. Roland listens to you, and Vincent listens to Roland, and they both listen to each other. Try and keep those two loose cannons on track. They have been selected as guides for Judy and are excellent at this kind of thing, but there are dangers in using them as well. You will also have an opportunity to counsel Judy yourself. I know you will be up to the task, but you may want to plan your message in advance so that you will be prepared to properly communicate it to her, if you know what I mean," he said with a wink.

"Finally, Amster, keep in mind that Judy must be fully advised of the voluntary nature of her involvement. With this much information so soon she may feel coerced. She must know that she is to participate only if she decides that it is what she wants to do." Amster nodded in agreement.

"Now go and let's rejoice as this mission adds a new member to the fold."

The next morning Vincent found Judy and Roland together. He greeted his old buddy with a hug and once again marveled at how mysteriously they had been brought together and how they worked together, with Roland on the road and Vincent backing him up when he could. Both were firmly dedicated to the mission and reveled in the anecdotes they could tell each other of spiritual growth and synchronicity. And they would have more to tell after this conference.

Vincent welcomed Judy as well, and they all settled down to listen to her story.

"Well," she started slowly, "I was completely taken aback by our telephone conversation. I could feel the love in your voices for each other and the fun you were obviously having together. I liked your laughter, but also your spirit. Your offer to be my guides to Sedona and at this conference was very tempting. What really convinced me to go, however, was my telephone conference with your friend Victoria, the cancer victim. I thought I was calling to counsel her in her fight with cancer, but it turned out that she counseled *me* when she told me what she knew about you two. She said that I would learn as much in this seven-day period as Moses learned during his forty years in the desert."

Vincent turned to Roland and deadpanned, "Moses was a slow learner!" They both laughed.

Judy smiled too, then continued, "Between that and the support of my friends, I took the plunge and came out without

either of you knowing I was going to be here. Then yesterday, when I got here and discovered that neither of you had arrived, I became depressed. I wondered what I was doing here and began to cry. Well, so many people rallied around me that I felt much better, and now that you two are here, I'm sure I have made the right decision."

She went on to tell them more about her life, of her desire to establish a spiritual center, of her love for cooking good and healthy food, and of her new catering business. Considering her their joint responsibility, Vincent and Roland immediately adopted Judy, vowing to be her protectors and "manservants" for the remainder of the conference. They introduced her to everyone they knew and spent time discussing their mutual beliefs, but most of all, they demonstrated to her the example of a loving friendship. She was in good hands.



Roland and Vincent had spent the first full day at the conference meeting and greeting the other attendees. Vincent was especially excited to finally be able to put a face to names he had heretofore only known through the Internet. This event was a true love fest and Vincent couldn't get enough hugs—it was like a slice of what a world would be like in the ages of Light and Life. There were many heart connections being made, many others being renewed, like at a family reunion. It was as if time was compressed, and much could happen in a short period.



Each day of the conference began with a plenary session in the ballroom, with a speaker, prayers and music. After that were breakout sessions on different topics. None of them appealed to Vincent, so he left Roland and Judy to their own devices and decided to choose where to go by the intuitive method. That is, he walked by the various rooms in which the groups were gathered and trusted his intuition to feel which would be the most interesting. He did this for a while, not feeling a thing, then happened to

glance outside to a field where the teens and a few adults had organized a softball game.

Vincent smiled and headed out to join the game. He might not be intuitive, but he knew what he liked. He hadn't played softball since his knee operation from a skiing accident, but he figured if he took it easy, everything would be fine.

He was welcomed into the game. He was enjoying himself, getting to know all the kids and happily playing shortstop, but he was incapable of playing at anything less than full speed. He twisted his ankle diving for a fly ball and stained his shirt sliding for a grounder, and every chance he got he talked to the kids about his theories on sports and life. He was in his element.

A building was being used as the left field fence and several players hit balls on the roof, but when the ball bounced back onto the field, the hitter could usually be limited to a double or a triple. Vincent, however, hit two over the building in dramatic fashion, making himself something of a hero to the teenagers, who greeted him everywhere he went for the rest of the conference. But all this didn't do much for his knee, which almost immediately swelled up. He was hurting as he limped back to the dorm to take a shower.



There were so many people at the conference from other countries and with such diverse perspectives that Vincent wondered what they could all possibly have in common. While listening to one of the speakers, a professor named Bob, he figured it out.

"Not long ago," Bob began, "I attended a retreat of Urantia Book readers north of San Francisco, in wine country. During an afternoon break a couple of us wanted to take a walk down the road to enjoy the lush beauty of a sunny day. As we gathered our sunglasses and hats, several others joined the walk. The air was filled with good cheer despite the fact that we were a diverse group, representing strongly differing viewpoints on the Urantia Book movement and the teachings of the book.

"There were moments of walking in silence, each not knowing how others would react to certain unpopular ideas and poten-

tially controversial points of view of great importance to one or more of us. Before long we began to pass some of the small wineries that populate the Sonoma Valley. As we came to an especially inviting establishment, someone suggested we go in and sample the fruit of the vine.

"I was a little hesitant because I am not much of a drinker and I was unsure how wine tasting would affect the rest of my day at the retreat. By the time we reached the door of the tasting room, others had voiced the same concern. It turned out that few were regular drinkers. This put us at ease and we proceeded into the winery.

"But we were still engaged in much small talk, perhaps deliberately avoiding the strong biases each of us knew the others had about seemingly critical aspects of our spiritual movement. With our wine samples in hand, we stood in a circle in a quiet, perhaps awkward, moment, hesitating about what to toast to. Was this going to be a spontaneous remembrance supper? Or an opportunity to get more serious and proselytize, pushing our individual interpretations of what's truly true? Or was this moment just a casual social occasion?

"Suddenly someone in the group lifted his glass high and said, 'Here's to the next 500,000 years!' This broke the ice. We all lifted our glasses and laughed with relief at the common realization that every one of our issues and strongly held convictions will be either resolved or become irrelevant over such a vast expanse of time."

And it was then that Vincent realized that it was not so much what our issues or perspectives were but how we treated our brothers and sisters with love that would endure.

That was the eternal link and that was what this conference was all about.

On the free day of the conference, Vincent, Roland and Judy loaded up into Roland's new Izuzu Trooper and headed for Sedona. Judy wanted to see the town because a friend of hers had had a life-changing spiritual experience there, but Vincent's purpose was to visit Gabriel of Sedona's community, as he had promised to do. Roland, as usual, had no set agenda except to engage those he encountered with good humor.

Beforehand, the three had prayed for God's will to be made manifest in their day together—their first conscious day of "team light working." Judy said she was "blown away" to be praying with her new soulmates like this before embarking on a day of sightseeing. It cemented her conscious intent to do the will of God.

In the main street of Sedona, they stopped while Vincent phoned for directions to Gabriel's community, as there was no address listed. When Vincent got a representative on the line, he was told he couldn't have that information until he'd had an interview. He objected, reminding them that he had already been invited, but his protestations fell on deaf ears so with a sigh he allowed himself to be interrogated. He found the questions odd. He was asked where he had lived when he was six years old and from which continent his ancestors had come. Vincent, in his typical manner, gave sarcastic answers and refused to pay the \$60 that they demanded to speak with them. As a result of what they deemed Vincent's "flippant" attitude, it was determined that neither Vincent, Roland nor Judy would be permitted to visit.

Vincent tried not to pass judgment on Gabriel's community, since he hadn't had the opportunity to meet the individuals involved, but his human response was negative. He later spoke to others who found it to be a loving community, but the tenets which it embraced still concerned him. Just because you are a Urantia Book reader doesn't mean you can't be embracing a skewed path. After all, everyone is still human.



Thereafter the trio headed for some of the old mining towns nearby and visited the museums. On the way, Roland kept things stirred up by interacting with many of the people they met. At a gas station where they stopped to get drinks, Roland began cleaning the windows of an RV that had pulled up at the next pump, and was soon introducing the occupants—a minister and his family—to Vincent and Judy. Continuing on, laughing all the way, they sang along with Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again," substituting their own words: *"We're the best of friends, insisting that the world be turning our way!"*

Roland believed that one of the most important activities was meeting and greeting new people. Soon they were each following Roland's lead, stepping out and talking to strangers along the way. Stopping in at a restaurant for lunch, and motivated by Roland, Judy and Vincent immediately struck up a conversation with a family sitting nearby by asking them how the soup was. After receiving their assessment, Vincent continued to chat with them while Roland and Judy exchanged knowing smiles. When the family found out that Vincent was an attorney, they became more interested in the conversation, as their daughter was considering law school and had been discouraged by several attorneys they knew. Vincent told the daughter to ignore the lawyers and to follow her own desire, adding that while many attorneys don't like their jobs, it is still a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in the world. That was exactly what the whole family wanted to hear.

"Indeed," Vincent continued, "making a difference is what we should all be about, and it is just that desire which led me to

the Urantia Book and to embark on this spiritual mission that you see us on today." He told them about the spiritual upliftment in process, then spelled out the name of the book on one of his business cards and invited them to call him if they had any other questions regarding either law school or the book. As they left, Roland poked Vincent in the ribs and said, "Smooth!"

This type of activity continued throughout the day. Inside a bar, the customers were showered with so much love and kindness, and received so many hugs from Roland and Judy, that someone finally said that if they didn't quit all the laughing they would have to call the fun police. A woman at a used book store was promised a used Urantia Book by Vincent. It took hours for them to walk down the street, but they truly felt they were out in the field doing God's work—and they loved it.



When the trio was asked what religion they represented, Roland was fond of saying that they belonged to the "Church of the What's Happening Now." Vincent thought Roland had gotten the idea from an old Flip Wilson comedy routine, but he was never sure. In any event, whenever Roland told someone the name of their church, it would always elicit a question or two about the tenets of their denomination. Roland would then reply, "Do you know where we worship?"

The stranger would invariably shake his head no. Then Roland would turn to Vincent and Judy and they would all reply in unison, "Wherever we are!"

Then Roland would ask, "And do you know when we worship?" The stranger would again shrug his shoulders, and Vincent and Judy would say, "Right now!"

Finally, Roland would put on his best preacher voice and say, "And what is the topic of our sermons?"

"What's happenin'!?"

At that point all three of them would convulse in laughter, invariably causing the stranger to smile and wonder what these three misfits were all about. However, it often led to some interesting conversations, and that, of course, was the whole idea.



When they returned from the Sedona adventure, Vincent's knee was so swollen that he could barely walk so Judy offered to try some "Judy Reiki" on it. They sat under a shady tree while she placed her hands on the knee. Vincent didn't feel any improvement, but he was glad he didn't have to walk for a while.

After their rest they climbed back in the Trooper and headed for a local vortex, supposedly where the earth's magnetic lines interact to produce an energy swirl. Sedona is famous for having several of them, and the main street is full of shops selling vortex maps, vortex tours, and even canned vortex.

When they reached the parking lot, Vincent groaned when he realized that the vortex was located high up in the foothills, a serious hike for someone with a bad knee. But he was willing to try and, to his surprise, his swollen knee gave him no problem.

At the vortex Vincent sensed nothing unusual, but Roland said he could feel the swirl. Of course, thought Vincent, Roland would feel it! They stayed at the vortex enjoying each other's company until the sun went down. They were so happy together that they couldn't resist linking arms and singing. It was one of those magical days.

One of the many to come.

The next day Vincent noticed that Judy's arms were shaking involuntarily from time to time. She couldn't explain it, except to say that she could feel the energy of the conference surging through her. Vincent, of course, could feel nothing. But he was like that.

As Vincent stood talking to an old acquaintance, he observed Judy out of the corner of his eye. She had grabbed a woman's hand with both of hers, her eyes were closed and she was rocking back and forth. The other woman also had her eyes closed and was humming a melodic tune. Everyone around them had stopped their conversations to watch, and one man jumped in and put his hands on Judy's back. Obviously something was going on.

After five minutes of this, the three opened their eyes and the woman began thanking Judy. She told everyone who was watching that upon arising that morning she had prayed to God to heal her as she was almost too ill to attend the conference, and praised Him for the answer to her prayers. Vincent and Judy looked at each other, both in wonder about what had just occurred. But it wasn't the last time that Judy would witness her gift of healing emerge.

Soon two other women received healings from Judy. Then the conference organizer called for someone to minister to one of the adults who had developed a migraine headache while running the nursery, and Judy took care of that as well.

She and Vincent were both amazed by her healing ability, but the process tired her out. They collected Roland and went out for a good dinner to reflect on the day—an interesting one for Judy, especially. Roland and Vincent were worried that perhaps things were moving too fast, but she was game and had no desire to slow down.

Judy believed that the healing gift manifested like it did because the three had prayed together the day before for God's will to be done.

Vincent was scheduled to speak at a workshop about his spiritual path. He hadn't really prepared for it, as every time he thought he might find an extra moment to jot down his ideas, something like the Judy healings sprang up. He figured that when the time came he would just take a deep breath and let the spirit move him.



In keeping with their joyful attitude, Roland, Vincent and Judy decided to join everyone else that evening for some “joking and jiving” at the scheduled dance. It was hard to tell in the mass of bodies who was dancing with whom, but it didn't matter. They were all in the groove, having a good time. This spiritual seeking certainly isn't boring or dull, thought Vincent, as he raised his hands to the ceiling and shouted,

“I love this mission!”

When someone becomes interested in the Teaching Mission, sooner or later they want a private session with a teacher. When Judy expressed such a desire, Vincent recommended that she use Roland as the transmitter, as he was one of the clearest and most reliable that Vincent knew.

Later that night, after the dance, Roland, Judy and Vincent gathered together with a tape recorder. Roland got comfortable and the room grew quiet as the three waited for a teacher. They didn't have to wait long.

"Good evening, I am Amster. What pleases me the most about my role in the Teaching Mission, is to communicate through Roland so he can be of assistance to his fellows. It is my great joy to serve you in this capacity. It fulfills my mandate as a teacher and a friend. Therefore if you have questions for me, please present them.

Judy spoke up: "I want to know what's happening to me."

Amster responded, "You have been prepared to receive much through the great challenges that you have overcome in your life—challenges in relationships, and with your material and mechanistic world. This most recent experience began with the turmoil you felt when you were deciding whether or not to come to this conference. In that process you have re-identified and shifted some priorities that will allow you to move freely in the work you have accepted. Your abilities in the spiritual realm are many. You have

begun to understand the scope and breadth of the service that you may perform for your brothers and sisters.

"These gifts you will identify, clarify and magnify in the next few years. These years will be a preparatory time to develop the inner strength required to perform these services without upsetting or taxing your psycho-physical system. The healing talent that you're most aware of now is but one of the special gifts which you will recognize.

"You are beginning to understand on a conscious level your involvement with the Correcting Time of this planet. Of course, all this depends on your decision, your own free will to choose to use these gifts in the uplifting of the spiritual values and meanings of Earth. Does this help?

"Yes, it does," Judy responded, "but I would like some insight about my new healing gift—how I should approach the burgeoning energy and how can I balance it in my life? How I can use it to do God's work?"

Amster replied, "Your last comment, how to do God's work, is the essential element in creating positive, uplifting, spiritually valuable experiences. Think of yourself as a conduit for the Father's love. The power of God is the love of God, the healing power of God is the love of God. In your participation as a channel for God's love energy, you need only concern yourself with your role as an intermediary through which this energy flows to bless those mortals who will come to you. The only way such healing is accomplished, through the spirit, is in the manner I have described. Therefore, remain clear and unbiased and unprejudiced about the condition you are healing. In this process, you will notice yourself reaching a higher level of consciousness, a higher level of joy and a higher level of healthiness in the mind, body and spirit. For in service you have expanded, strengthened and affirmed this, your opportunity to choose to serve."

Judy said, "I was hoping for some guidance—an outline perhaps—on how to approach the person to be healed. I will try not to be biased or judgmental about the illness, but should we also pray together? Meditate? Hold each other?"

Amster answered, "One of your qualities is an intuitive sense of the correctness of your application of the healing in each case.

Prayer accentuates intuition, meditation magnifies it. It is therefore recommended that first you trust your intuitive nature; second, you pray; and third, you empty your mind to receive instructions from the spirit who attends you. He is omniscient, knows all things—you will know, in the moment.”

“In what capacity am I to work with Roland and Vincent?” asked Judy.

Amster replied, “We are beginning to understand the human curiosity to know and define roles of peripheral humans and the subject and purpose of mission in your lives. I say this with kindness and gentleness and with a desire for you to understand. While we are in this process, we cannot look out and predict accurately any interpersonal relationship, because of the factor of choice, free will, and the element of preserving free will. We would not, even if we knew, predefine a relationship for you. I understand your curiosity to know, but it is up to you to allow these associations to unfold.

“Let me say, in closing, that we have attended you, and you have been aware of our presence for many years before this time. You have been trained in many ways. I am happy to meet a sister, still in the mortal flesh, who has the capacity to choose to serve, and serve well, throughout the remainder of her mortal career.

“Please be aware that there is no timetable. You are under no pressure for completion or task assignment. This work will be *joyful* and *easy* for you to accomplish. Sweet sister, I invite you, I encourage you and I love you in whatever decision, whatever path, whatever choices you make. You are a glorious daughter of God. Always remember that.

“And for now, I bid you goodnight and bless you . . . and leave you with Michael’s peace.”

Vincent stood before the workshop group with the intention of telling them about his spiritual path, but he had no idea what he would say. He cleared his throat and began.

“Ten years ago there was no way I could have guessed that I would be standing before you today. Up to that time I was primarily interested in becoming a millionaire and living a life of luxury. I was quite the hedonist. Today that is the farthest thing from my mind.

“I continue to be transformed. Why I elected to follow this path, I can’t say. I’m not particularly pious, nor religious. In fact, I was actively opposed to organized religion and still don’t attend church much. But for some reason I was prepared when the call came. I was intrigued when I discovered the Urantia Book. I thought I had found truth and I still believe that. But I hadn’t gone far enough. I hadn’t incorporated that truth into my life. That’s what the Teaching Mission has done for me.

“There was a time when I felt that I needed to convince everyone I knew that the Urantia Book and the Teaching Mission were true. Now I know better as my understanding has matured. It is no longer important what path another is on, for I recognize that everyone has unique needs that can be filled only by individual approaches to God. There are indeed many paths.

“What I am trying to say is that my present understanding, which is still evolving, is that what is important is not the differences between people, but the love that is shared between them.

"It is no coincidence that you are at this conference. We are all here today because we have been given a glimpse of God's plan. Love is the coin of the universe. This universe is one huge education system. We are always either learning or teaching. It is time to take the knowledge we have and use it to reach back to our brothers and sisters and lend them a hand. We are charged with the responsibility of transforming ourselves. We are each apostles and disciples. We are called to share God's love in our everyday lives.

"The good news is that our job is an easy one. We are only asked to plant seeds. God will nurture them and see to the consequences of the planting.

"This mission is one of joy. We experience such gratification in what we are called to do. This is no somber affair, but one of laughing and hugging and dancing. We have fun. We rejoice. We love. We assist our brothers and sisters.

"I have heard the call and I am doing my best to respond. Each of you has likewise heard the call or you wouldn't be sitting here today. It is time, my friends, to step out of the comfort zone. There are many who need to hear the good news that God is our Father and that we are all brothers and sisters. They await you. Many others in the world at this time are responding to the same call. You will recognize one another although they may come from different perspectives. They are all light workers.

"We are supported in this process by multitudes of God's helpers. They cannot infringe upon our free will; however, they can assist in many other ways. As we go forward, we will see the effects of their preparatory work. The synchronicities will become clear to us.

"I bless you for your efforts. I thank you for your time. I encourage you to step out and grab the banner of Michael.

If not now, when will we be about the Father's work?"

Fast forward to August, 1999. Machiventa gathered the teachers together:

“My friends, this effort for the spiritual upliftment of this planet is dynamic and flexible, as it must be. The world is daily faced with great crises and resultant opportunities. Although we are working diligently, it has been determined that it is time for more physical intervention. We have just been notified of the impending arrival of a Magisterial Son. This Magisterial Mission will include many support personnel, including myself. This is a long-term mission intended to be a catalyst for change that will bring this planet back from the edge of chaos and destruction.

“You will continue to support the planet and our mission from your spiritual, invisible realm. This is an exciting and demanding time. We look forward to the challenge. Pray for our success. Failure is not an option.”

With these words, Machiventa and the rest of the Melchizedeks took their leave as they began preparations for their arrival on Earth as physical beings.

It was time for the next phase of the Correcting Time.

By 2004 the Magisterial Son had still not appeared. Many were disappointed but just as many recognized such events never happen when people think they will. The groups were still unified in spirit, and volunteers had come forth to establish an Internet archive for bringing together, for research and study, the many and varied transmissions from the teachers that had accumulated over the past fifteen years.



On November 21, 2004, a Colorado group received a new message that gave more details of what this next phase of the Correcting Time would involve:

RAYSON: Good afternoon, this is Rayson. It is a pleasure to be here once again with you. Today we have what you might call a momentous occasion. We have a guest who will present the issues today, and we welcome Gabriel among you.

GABRIEL: This is Gabriel. Welcome my friends, to a new day, a new era in the journey of your planet into the days of Light and Life. I am here in the presence of Christ Michael and Nebadonia, the Council of Twenty-Four, and Machiventa Melchizedek. I speak with the authority of our Sovereign Creator, Christ Michael of Nebadon. This pronouncement today is to inaugurate the Sec-

ond Revelatory Commission for the enhancement of the documents known as the Urantia Papers. The Second Revelatory Commission will be adjunctive to the offices of Machiventa Melchizedek until the offices of the Magisterial Son are open and operational. We foresee this as a decades-long process that will be co-creatively developed and brought into existence through the assistance of mortals, midwayers, Melchizedeks, and those who have higher authority, knowledge, and awareness.

Some of you may be wondering—or have wondered already—why developments are proceeding so rapidly on Urantia. And, my friends, let me say that it is a natural development, that we are not rushing this, but these developments are logical and reasonable, considering that the Lucifer adjudication has taken place, the circuits on your planet have been renewed and restored almost completely, Machiventa Melchizedek has been made Sovereign Planetary Prince of Urantia, the Magisterial Son will be appearing on your planet sometime in the future, the Urantia Papers have been published for over fifty years, the Correcting Time is in place, and the Teaching Mission has now been well-initiated. It is rational, reasonable and timely to now develop the papers that will presage the arrival of the Magisterial Son among you, and which will be completed with his assistance.

Machiventa Melchizedek will be the presiding officer of the Second Revelatory Commission, until such time as the Magisterial Son is established and in place. . . . Much has already been prepared and given and shared with you, which are now kept in the Teaching Mission archives. There are materials within the archives that will be useful for the expansion of the Papers.

There will also be, of necessity, a joint committee or body of mortals and midwayers and Melchizedeks working together to devise questions that will need to be answered and which will flesh out in the Papers and be presented as submissions to the Commission.

These texts will not be a replacement for the Urantia Book—the Urantia Book is a *fait accompli*, it is complete, it is whole, it is existent, it is well known, it is established, and now it is being shared as common written material, without limitation. These new papers will be separate, stand on their own right and will provide answers to ques-

tions regarding the original Urantia Book text, which are not provided through it. In addition, parts of the new text will provide coordinating information about the development of an evolution to the days of Light and Life, under the reign of your Magisterial Son.

This announcement, and the forthcoming development of the second series of Urantia Papers, is not intended to be a threat to the established organizations that support the Urantia Book. You will find, just as the Teaching Mission was a personal revelation to the teachings of the Urantia Book, that this will be further enhancement of the personal appeal and approach, and revelation in written form. It will make more understandable these traumatic times on your planet, and the era that is forthcoming and the era after that. . . .

Questions that you have concerning this Second Revelatory Commission and its work should be directed to Machiventa, who will have a subordinate staff to assist in these projects. Do not be afraid to speak directly with Christ Michael or Machiventa, as they will be most easily open to you to discuss this project.

We among you today salute you, we bow to you, we appreciate your assistance, your willing participation, your eager anticipation of being a closer part on a morontial level within your mortal experience with these activities. We wish you well.

Good day.

There are times in any spiritual seeker's life when the inherently intangible nature of the quest requires an evaluation of the truth of the information presented as fact. It was just such a time for Vincent, in late 2004, when he received an unsolicited call from a friend of a friend.

"Vincent?"

"Yes?"

"My name is Ann. You don't know me, but we have a common acquaintance who suggested that I call you. For many years I have had a spiritual guide—a friend, really. When I was young, it so concerned my parents that they forbade me to speak of this friend and I ultimately lost contact. Recently, however, in response to my request to God to explain who Jesus was, I began hearing from my guide again. He said to me, 'Do you want to know who Jesus is?' When I replied that I did, he said, 'Don't you remember being with me on this side and being taught by Machiventa?' Suddenly, I *did* remember. Machiventa of the Melchizedeks was an excellent teacher, with long, silky white hair, matching beard, and flowing robes. He taught love and service, and was much loved and esteemed by his students. 'Well,' continued my guide, 'Machiventa taught Michael's lessons. And Michael was known as Jesus on your world of Urantia.' When I told this story to our mutual friend and she heard the word 'Urantia,' she immediately told me to call you.

"She also mentioned that you read a book called the Urantia Book, and I was surprised that there was such a book. I went to the bookstore, and when I found the aisle where it was located, it seemed to glow and practically jumped off the shelf into my hands. After that, I thought that perhaps we should talk."

Another synchronicity! Vincent readily agreed to see Ann and invited her to the Urantia Book group meeting so she could tell them her story. By this time, the members were actively pursuing different paths to convey the message of the Urantia Book but they still got together regularly, and this night they had all gathered for a potluck dinner. When Ann told them her story, it again confirmed for them that the Urantia Book was indeed an extraordinary revelation.

More importantly, as they joined hands for a group prayer, they each recognized that, despite their different paths, what was most important was their love for each other and their faith in God.

This life is the beginning of an awesome adventure.

[Author's Note]

This is a continuing story. Stay alert to the possibilities. The story cannot end until this planet has reached the ages of Light and Life. You who are reading this may be asking yourself if there is a reason you were provided with this text. You too may feel the call. Are you ready to step out of the comfort zone? It requires no money. You don't have to belong to any particular religion. You can be a member of any class, race or gender. The only requirement for participation is an interest in assisting in the upliftment of this planet and in advancing your own spiritual growth.

Your Spirit of Truth will help you to determine whether or not this story is true. Some of the names have been changed and the events condensed, but the facts have been accurately depicted. What they mean is left up to you.

Now is the time. It will never be any sooner. Ask yourself what you wish to be remembered for. The higher path beckons. Answer the call.

Step out in love and watch your world be transformed.